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A LOST LIFE.

A Novel.

159642

BY

EMILY H. MOORE.

["MIGNONETTE."]



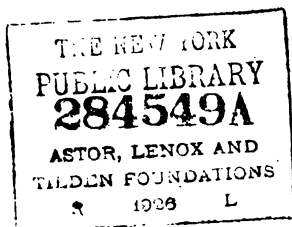
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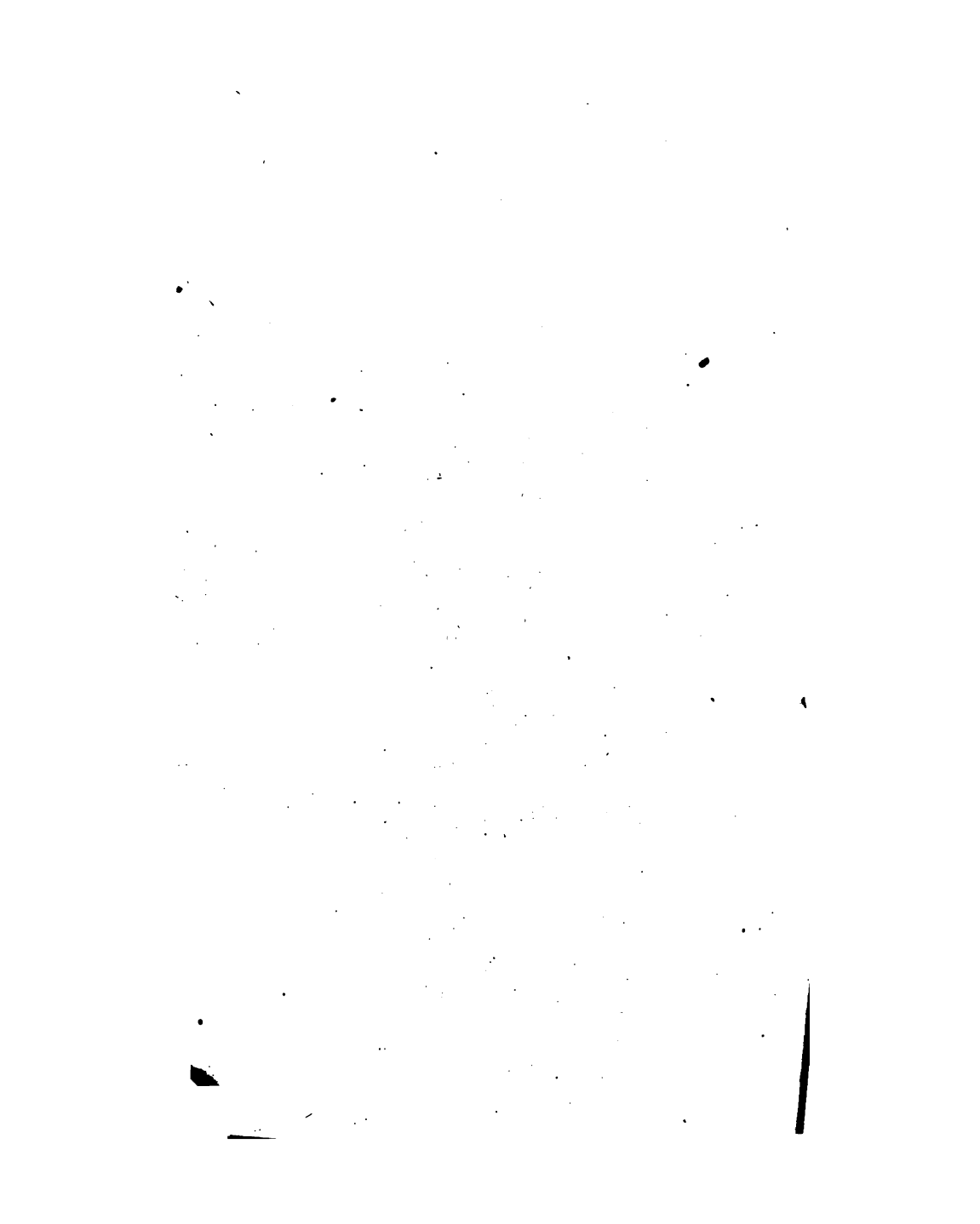
Some said, "John, print it," others said, "Not so;"
Some said, "It might do good."

Bunyan.



TO
MY FATHER AND MOTHER

This Volume
IS LOVINGLY INSCRIBED.





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A LOST LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

BAYWOOD AND THE DOCTOR.



AM the Doctor's wife in the quiet town of Baywood.

This statement, if you knew what it is to be the Doctor's wife, and were acquaint with Baywood, would be in itself sufficient: otherwise it is not; and for the sake of vast numbers of ignoramuses who knew neither the one nor the other, I will be more explicit.

First the Doctor:

The Doctor is a great man. This conviction crept upon me several years ago, when he came down from his college dignity and stammered and faltered like the commonest dunce over the simple act of asking me—a very ordinary young woman in a pink lawn and black-silk apron—to be his wife.

This question I had for many days been listening for, with a vague, trembling fear that I might after all never hear it ; and so, when it came, my whole being seemed to be transformed into one mighty heart, and that heart gave a great throb of joy.

In this condition it did not occur to me to say that it was very sudden and unexpected, and that I—I—really—was not prepared to answer. I was paralyzed with happiness. I could only dumbly lift my eyes to his, and suffer myself to be drawn to a heart that has since been my haven from every storm that blows.

I have—sometimes in an hour of twilight pathos or pensive fireside revery—tried to torture myself, by way of diversion, with the thought that I was “too easy won,” altogether. In those moments I have imagined it might have been keener romance if I had first jilted him, had him flung into brain fever or from the back of his spirited horse, kindly cared for him during the dangerous illness, and in the first lucid moments of convalescence and returning despair humbly offered myself to him ; or, at least, I might have treated his offer with amazement, dropped a hint relative to loving another, and led him a piquant, wild-goose chase of hopes and fears, instead of thus falling at a touch into his outspread arms.

Arrived at this point in the revery, my next

step is to feel afraid that the Doctor may be entertaining the same reflections regarding me,—may in fact have begun secretly to tire of one who loved him at once and without disguise.

So persistently do I exercise my imagination in this sombre line of thought, that when the Doctor's step is heard at last in the hall, I at once drag him forward into the firelight, and look at him rather keenly and critically before deciding to bring his slippers.

However keen my investigations, I have never yet discovered anything but the same deep, kind, sea-blue eyes, the same wide, placid brow, and the mouth that is the dearest mouth in the world for firmness and tenderness and infectious mellow laughter.

So, balked in this direction, I have sometimes feared that—on the whole—the Doctor's and mine is not a true love. True love, it has appeared to me, could not run so smoothly. The greatest, truest, deepest, sweetest, and most tenacious love, as I have understood it, is no idle affair to deal with. An obstinate parent or two,—a very great and long-unexplained misunderstanding—a forged letter—a mysterious disappearance—rivals—a prolonged absence—calumny—ecstasy and anguish—all, or at any rate some, of these things should appear in the course of a love that would assert any claims to being true.

Looking back through a brief courtship, I see with dismay that we encountered nothing of the kind. My own parents were well pleased; and the Doctor's being in Heaven, and a Planchette communication then unknown, no opposition was placed in the way of our marriage. We were thus deprived of the sharp pleasure of driving away in a close carriage at eleven o'clock of the night, with the driver lashing the horses into a mad gallop, the Doctor breathing reassuring vows, and I in hysterical tears, with my cameo set and pearl brooch tied up firmly in my pocket handkerchief.

"Strawberries and cream must be wicked—they are so delicious!" said a witty young lady once upon a time; and because our love has run so smoothly and life has been so deliciously good to us, I have been at times very confident that something must be wrong; and I have looked about me earnestly, resolved that if there *is* a source of misery—test-misery—to be discovered, I will discover it.

One day I thought I had found it. A lock of hair!—a long, pale, golden, silken tress, which, I was forced to acknowledge, looked beautifully, contrasted with my own brown braids. I found it in the bottom of a little drawer in the Doctor's writing-desk one morning, as I was affectionately putting his things to rights.

A lock of hair ! And this, then, was the return for all my lavish love.

I know a fine writer who made a whole story out of an instance of this kind. The wife quietly replaced the tress, and went about her everyday life as usual, letting the curl prey upon her for a year or two, when, after a complete estrangement between herself and her husband, everything was "explained," and all was well. That — and nothing more — was the plot. It was a straightforward story, as devoid of dramatic movement as this which I am about to tell.

But let me not wander from my anecdote.

I took the pale gold curl in my hand and carried it to the Doctor, who was outside the window training a wilful honeysuckle.

"Will you tell me about this, John?" said I, leaning suddenly forth and fixing upon him a gaze that must have said, "You see how calm I am!"

"Ah!" said the Doctor, taking the tress from my hand tenderly, "you found this! How beautiful it is in the sunlight! just as fair and soft as when — 'There seems a love in hair, tho' it be dead;' " making long pauses between his dreamily spoken and slightly incoherent sentences.

I waited a moment in silence. Then — "Who's is it?" I firmly questioned, probing this sudden wound in my heart with an unflinching hand.

“My mother’s, of course!”

How that “of course” scattered my base, bitter unworthy thoughts! I tried at once to appear my usual sunny self, but the Doctor caught sight of my searching eyes and the red spots that were burning in my cheeks, and read me like a book.

“What!—was the girl really thinking *that* of me?” and I rushed away from his pursuing laughter deeply ashamed and infinitely happy, and have never since essayed the *rôle* of the jealous wife.

Not to say but that I have had grounds. It was very trying to me at first,—such a wonderful lot of attractive patients as he was continually visiting or harboring! It seemed to me that patients—especially the attractive ones—came to him upon the slightest pretexts, and were closeted in his office for many long moments over very trifling ailments. It was my serious aim at one time to study medicine at once and vigorously, that I might take this class of patients off the Doctor’s hands; but my naturally humane heart whispered there might be a great falling off on the part of the patients, and I resigned the aim.

It is possible the Doctor may have divined some of these ideas of mine; for after a case of Very Pretty Patient and long consultation he would call me into his study, or come to me in the garden,

and talk to me in a tender, diverting way, and interest his great mind in my housekeeping, my painting—I painted very successful pieces for our dining room—my gardening, and my new music, until my heart was as sunny as an August meadow, and an entire peace and trust enveloped me. With seeming unconsciousness he calmed my fears and I was calm.

Next to the minister—I am not sure but I might say *before* the minister—the Doctor is looked up to in this staid inland town. He was born here, his father was born here, and his grandfather came here to live when a young man; and they were all Doctors, and they handed down from one to the other unblemished names, distinguished medical skill, and a dear, old, massive, gabled stone house, overhung by elms and venerable with moss.

On our engagement it was brightened up with cheerful new furniture, and a bay-window so large, that, having filled it with roses and heliotropes and graceful ivies, it became both sitting-room and conservatory.

Other Doctors pitch their tents here, put out their impertinent gilt-lettered signs, advertise in our one conservative newspaper, and begin buoyantly enough with glittering gigs and spanking trotters. But their reign—if they may be said to have a reign—is brief.

Gradually the pompous advertisement dwindles to a mere card; the spanking trotter goes about less and less, and evidently aimlessly; the new Doctor's hat takes on the merest look of seediness; and by and by the new Doctor himself—who must feel convinced that he is a piece of fanaticism from first to last—quietly steals away, surrendering the field per force to my St. John.

Half the maidens in Baywood did cast longing eyes upon the position which I fill. I am not a native of Baywood—having met the Doctor elsewhere—and it was difficult for me not to regard myself as an interloper and a trampler upon established rights, when I came to know of the adulation with which Baywood maidens had regarded this fine homestead and its still finer encumbrance. I was treated by several defrauded beauties with a frank coolness which at once opened my eyes to the importance of the post I held; and if I was proud before, I now became regal in my possessions.

All at once many rash marriages occurred in Baywood. The principal merchant's daughter gave her hand to her father's book-keeper—a poor and deserving young man. The minister's daughter, a lovely but ambitious girl, decided to bless a thriving young farmer who had long loved her. A well-to-do milliner of forty, with a thou-

sand or two in bank, and who, I am sure, had counted strongly on my St. John, suddenly wedded a widower in the boot and shoe business; and the squire's eldest daughter—an acknowledged belle—abruptly accepted the schoolmaster.

A heart in the rebound, we know, is easily caught. There is nothing so good for unrequited love or false love or lost love, as a new love; and if any ambitious or fond hearts suffered at the time the Doctor brought me to Baywood, they have now apparently forgiven and forgotten, and have created their worlds around new centres.

Yet it was several months before I could thoroughly establish myself in the good hearts among which I found myself. Old ladies were anxious to know if I could make soap, if I understood the mystery of good bread, and if the choice fruit was to be jellied and preserved as nicely as when "his mother" was alive. While the younger ones flaunted their miracles in embroidery, patchwork, and "agricultural" wreaths, and almost openly challenged me to display anything half as fine among my own personal possessions.

The inhabitants of Baywood are naturally shy of "new" people. All the families are old, here; the giant lilacs and snow-balls, decking every doorway, are old; the houses are old; even the babies—for babies will persist in coming to Baywood—


are not like the common frisky babies of whose antecedents we are ignorant, but are solid, serious, well-established babies, who cry as their ancestors cried, and accept their first nourishment of sugared water from little old silver spoons with an *aplomb* and an assurance that I have never seen manifested in the cosmopolitan Baby.





CHAPTER II.

THE GOOD MATCH.

VERY one said it was a good match ; not our marriage, but that of Elenor Leonard and Austin Wayne.

A marriage could not occur in Baywood without the parties being as thoroughly discussed as if they had died ; and Elenor Leonard and Austin Wayne were discussed with more than ordinary vigor, because of Mr. Wayne's prominent and desirable position as a holder of one of the best farms in the county.

They said it was a good match because Austin Wayne was a very quiet, sober, accumulative man, who had not one bad habit—not even the gracefully bad habit of smoking cigars ; and because Elenor Leonard was a good, “steady,” industrious girl—a little too reserved, perhaps, for the good people of Baywood, who misunderstood this shy side of her nature, and considered it a kind of pride—and, although born of humble parents, a girl of education, nice manners, and taste

enough to make something of the means that by this marriage would be placed in her hands.

The Baywood point was, these two people — so mutually quiet, so mutually impervious to the common poms and vanities of life — were most capitally mated, because so much alike.

When I heard this verdict, I was not certain but a great mistake had been made. Two reticent natures do not make a happy combination.

I had been a resident of Baywood nearly a year before this good match transpired. I knew nothing, particularly, of Austin Wayne, except that he invariably entered his church pew at a certain moment every Sunday morning, clad in a well-preserved suit of black, and during the service looked constantly at the floor, his face always of a cool and bloodless cast, the mouth close, with a tendency to melancholy — an expression rather captivating than otherwise to some women; the brow not without signs of intelligence, but furrowed and slightly shrivelled in the upper region, as if the good “bumps” planted there by prodigal nature had been suffered to wither and dwindle into nothingness. Not a bad face on the whole, and, to one who loved the man, a face likely to become attractive.

Elenor Leonard, born and brought up in Baywood, was an only child. Her father dying,

and their little home of three or four acres hardly affording a living for her mother and herself, she sought a place in a neighboring town as teacher in a large primary school ; and from the proceeds of this arduous labor, together with the feeble crops from the farm, as she was pleased to term the three acres, she still kept the little home cottage snug and thrifty, its fires burning, and in a word, the kettle boiling.

I heard all this — as I heard everything else — before I had lived in Baywood one week ; but I did not chance to meet Elenor for a much longer time.

Mrs. Leonard had been ailing with rheumatism, and I went one morning to carry some prescription of the Doctor's and a glass of my currant jelly to her ; for although I cannot accomplish wonderful things in worsted and crochet, I believe it to be generally conceded that I am " a master hand " in the line of sweatmeats and their lucent kindred.

When people are sick in Baywood — unless it is a raging case of typhoid, or a fatal one of consumption, the obtaining of extra help is never thought of. The people are neighborly, and help one another. They understand each other's stoves, comprehend each other's pantries, know where each other's preserves are kept, and where

the hens lay, until Baywood seems like one great household, where there is no such thing as a private family. If some wife, or wife and mother, is ill, her neighbors come flocking in at once, each firmly resolved to do something for her comfort or for the general welfare of the family, until the house hums like a hive of bees.

I hope I do not exaggerate the case, because I take exceptions to this profuse neighborliness, and consider it to be a little overdone.

I went one afternoon to see a young mother, who was just able to be propped up with pillows and give directions in regard to the baby's toilet, and found no less than six good housewives intent upon preparing supper for her and making her comfortable? One luridly puffed and panted over the toasting fork; another made a fine clatter in the china closet; another strode about the room, putting things to rights; another volubly discussed the relative merits of green and black tea; another was startling the nervous system of the patient with the announcement that the strawberry preserve *was* working, and no mistake; and there were two or three who sat or leaned upon the bed, and shouted all manner of imbecile baby-talk to the infant.

No lack of care and attention, indeed; but I can't divest myself of the idea that it is the blessed

respite of night and silence, as well as my St. John's skill, that keeps many of our Baywood patients from being "helped" out of existence.

As I was saying, I went one morning to carry medicine to Mrs. Leonard, and it was then that I first met Elenor. It was early in the morning, and as charity begins at home, and people were busy with their own duties, the tide of neighborly feeling had not yet set in upon Mrs. Leonard. Perhaps it never did set in quite as strongly upon that little brown house, humble and lowly in its proportions, as upon more well-to-do mansions.

It is the peculiarity of many people, that they like to perform generous deeds and make generous bestowals where those deeds and bestowals are not strictly needed. In our most philanthropic and deeply religious communities, it is the millionaire who receives his solid silver service or splendid pair of thoroughbreds, while two blocks distant a mortgage is eating up some bravely struggling mechanic, or a poor sewing woman is slowly starving.

Mrs. Leonard, looking as comfortable as a rheumatic sufferer can look, sat in an arm-chair, with the Bible — that grand old solace of age and rheumatism — upon the stand at her side, and in the sunny window on the other hand a bright little bouquet of autumn leaves and marigolds. There

seemed to be a sweeter and finer tone in the air than I had ever before noticed in the brown cottage; and when some one came briskly in from the back garden, singing a merry air that hushed itself in sudden embarrassment at the threshold, I beheld the presence which explained the subtle charm.

She put her hand in mine with a shy grace as her mother named "the Doctor's wife," and retired at once into some needlework.

While Mrs. Leonard discussed with the solid satisfaction of your true invalid the various phases of her malady, and required nothing but a silent listener, I tried to study Elenor.

A girl who might be eighteen or twenty-five — such sweetness and such gravity mingled in the face bowed above her work! A finely shaped head with dark hair, having rich lights upon it, clinging like vine tendrils around the brow, but vigorously coerced into a coil at last, and banded with a black ribbon. A face not particularly striking, except that it had dark, level-browed, thoughtful, extraordinary eyes, and a certain restrained tenderness about the beautifully curved lips.

We always form more or less distinct ideas of some people look whom we have not seen, but expect to see. Whenever I had thought of "Miss Leonard — the teacher," and our citizens are not

so many that any one is unthought of, I drew the mental sketch of a prim, smooth-haired, gaunt, slightly supercilious young lady,—for we consider it rather of a genteel thing to be a teacher,—who would scent, like a bloodhound, all the grammatical errors in the conversation about her, and weigh “all thoughts, all passions, all delights,” according to the Rule of Three.

Judge, then, of the correctness of my photograph when I saw before me this shy, dark-eyed maiden, whose withdrawal into needlework savored not so much of the pride people had attributed to her, as to a kind of regretful timidity in having nothing in common with gossiping visitors.

When I rose to go, I resolved that I would know more of Elenor if she would let me. But we met rarely. I saw her in her “quiet” corner at one or two church sociables, and heard her sing in the choir every Sunday, a sweet, pure, but not very strong contralto—a low, tender undertone of real music, over which the soprano and tenor remorselessly screamed and wailed.

To return to the good match. I have some extracts from two private journals which may serve to illustrate the respective natures of the man and woman whom Baywood thought so admirably adapted to each other.

From Elenor's journal :

“ DAYTON, After School, June 10th.

“ Ah ! I have received my first love-letter ! It seems almost profane to speak of it in this way — a love-letter ! That is what Ellen Mathews and Lou Burton call the letters which they parade so openly and read in such “ confidence ” to all their school-mates. I could never do this, never, not even to my best friend. It seems so sacred to me — this letter — that I hardly dare speak of it even here.

“ I have thought of him a great deal. He was so kind to us when father died ; and he has loaned me so many books and paid mother so many generous attentions ! But I had not dreamed that he was thinking of *me*.

“ How good in him to take so much interest in a poor, stupid girl like me ! It seems as if all the world was just created, and that I live for the first time — or am just born into an existence “ rich and strange,” of which other people — the poor people outside my happy thoughts — know nothing.

“ Never was the sunlight so golden, the air so sweet, and the song of the birds so loud and joyous. Even the dull schoolroom, with its rows of benches and its long classes, its monotonous hum and its dingy-faced clock, has taken on enchantment.

“ I have read this letter so many times ! Every word seems to be written on my heart. If I close my eyes, there they are — ‘ Dear Elenor ’ ! That is all he says which one might really call tender ; but the whole letter to me is full of tenderness — and such high, great thoughts !

“ Last night I placed it under my pillow. It was foolish — it was just what Ellen and Lou would do — but I fancied some bright, sweet dream would come to me if I placed it there. Now I think of it, it was a bad dream — a long, troubled dream, in which I went wandering across a lonely, deserted country for a long distance until I was stopped by an open grave. No matter which way I turned, the grave was there ; and looking into it, at last, I saw — myself ! Ah ! when I awoke and saw the beautiful sunlight, and felt the bounding blood in my veins, the glow of life in my cheek, and found the letter still under my pillow, a sweet reality, and not a mocking dream, how grateful I was to know that God had *not* led me to the grave before this happiness came to me ! ”

AUGUST 1st, At home.

“ At mother’s. How bright and fresh the little old place looks after my absence — the first since I was born !

“ The afternoon was hot and dusty, and one of my rare headaches had fastened itself upon me ;

but the moment I got down from the stage, and dear mother met me at the gate, it seemed as if balm had dropped upon me from the skies. Dear mother! She never kisses me at night, or calls me 'darling,' as some mothers express themselves, but she is so kind and so good. I wonder why the difference exists. Last summer a lady from the South boarded with us during the hot months. What showers of pet names she had for *her* daughter! How impressively and tenderly she always kissed her 'good night'! I can't remember that I was ever loved in that way. I suppose it is because we are descended from the 'cold Puritans.' Mrs. Willoughby — our Southern guest — told me her mother was of French descent. I suppose that made the difference.

"Mother is so good and thoughtful! she had my little room sweet with lavender and spice-pinks, and the tea-table spread under the great lilac, with the cream-cakes I like so much, and the tea in our best china cups.

"After tea he came. It was nearly dusk, and although it seemed to me I had waited for ages, I was suddenly seized with a dread of meeting him. I ran into the kitchen and stayed there, blushing and trembling like a simpleton, until mother called me into the parlor. I had planned a very graceful speech with which to greet him, but I

remembered not a word. I am afraid I have no manners. He was much pleased to see me.

"I wonder if it is possible for me to be in the slightest degree beautiful. I would like beauty for his sake. I wore my best white dress, with some carnations in my hair, and in spite of my afternoon headache, mother said I was looking uncommonly well.

"We talked a long time of the school and other interesting topics, and then mother, who sleeps best in the early hours, went to her room and we were alone.

"All at once I could think of nothing to say, and there was such a terrible silence, I could plainly hear my heart beating. I rose and went to the open window, where through the fragrant maderias I could see the moonlight shining in a reassuring manner — telling me that heaven and earth were still the same in spite of the chaos into which my little wits had plunged!

"Presently he came and stood beside me. And in that fragrant, beautiful, shadowy light I heard these words: 'Will you be my wife, Elenor?'"

[I can imagine the manner in which Austin Wayne put this question: not as a plea, not with one quaver in his voice hinting of his own possible unworthiness; but in his even, cold, assured monotone, as if he in reality meant "You will marry

me, if you please, Miss Leonard!" Yet, passing through the medium of her own generous, impassioned thoughts, what tenderness and graciousness was in his words.]

"The question sounded along all the deeps of my soul. I had not looked for these words so soon. I dropped my head upon his breast and burst into unaccountable tears. — I must be *very* foolish. — He stood quietly waiting for me to recover myself. As my head rested there, I heard the tranquil, even beat of his heart; and when I dared to look into his face, that, too, was calm. What a brave, strong man he is! (I dislike silliness in a man), and how patient with my weakness!"

[Generous heart! — turning the consummate clamminess of his nature into a high virtue, and giving it homage!]

From Austin Wayne's journal, which came into my hands with other rubbish when we purchased the Wayne farm, I extract a few paragraphs. The diary is a meagre affair — devoted mostly to minutes of the farm; but here and there I glean things of a more personal nature.

"March 8th. . . . Mrs. Griggs is right when she says I had better marry if I want the dairy attended to. It can't be expected that hired help will look after every drop of milk when they have no interests beyond their wages."

"March 20th. . . . I've been thinking whether to marry or not to marry. My ideas regarding a true life say NO. A nature is stronger alone. I am master of myself and of my surroundings. One peaceful hour of free untrammelled thought is worth all the shallow *kittenishness* of this so-called domestic bliss. Men who live for nothing better may anchor there. For me, give me no dragging ties; nor let my life be horizoned by any mortal's smile or frown.

"On the other hand my interests say MARRY. Mrs. Griggs' philosophy is sound, and she illustrates it by serving up my Black Spanish chickens for a Sunday dinner, and throwing cream in the swill. Everything is exposed to waste. When my mother was alive, expenses were fifty per cent less than now. That comes of having an interested party in the house. Marriage might bring me a kind of 'silent partner' in the farm—one who could bring the capital of thrift and carefulness, and receive in turn—board and clothes!"

[I fancy Mr. Wayne smiled dryly as he penned the concluding words of this entry.]

"April 30th. . . . Women are all open books to me, and very silly books at that! I've watched a dozen girls growing up here in Baywood, and not one of them but what is a very pretty volume of weakness and worthlessness from title-page to

finis. They can't converse on any subject ranking above their beaux or their own personal adornment. None of them ever look inside a book—unless it be Godey or a novellette. None of them can fairly bound their own State, much less branch into any wider geography. Ineffectual insects!—who can drop out of life at any time and make no void.

“Elenor Leonard strikes me, however, as being rather of a sensible girl. She has several points in her favor. She's ‘poor;’ and must consequently be a girl of plain wants and economical habits; a sort of dull girl, too, and she wouldn't be filling the house with chattering tea-parties, or roaming among the neighbors when she should be at home.

“June 1st. . . . I have met Elenor several times of late. Allowed myself to take dinner with her last Sunday. The girl exerted herself to concoct some superfine cakes and sweetmeats, and I quite offended her mother by declining them. I never touch any but plain food, and Mrs. Austin Wayne—whoever she may be—must learn to attune her palate to mine.

“Her mother is, of course, a shallow old lady, without a thought above her rheumatism and her rainbow rag-carpet, but has an eye, no doubt, to the advantages of a home on the Wayne farm. It will be like Elenor to insist on having her mother

with her, but I shall take care not to bow my shoulders to such a burden.

“I catch myself wondering whether she is half congenial to me. She has some intellect, but she is sometimes strangely silent when I talk of things that most interest me. Also, she gives herself too much to the moment—to the little worthless details of life; also she has rather too much will; but *that* does not matter. She is an industrious, well-looking girl, and is about as good as Baywood affords. I am thirty-nine years old, and if marriage must come, perhaps the sooner it comes the better. I will try my hand at a few ‘love-letters.’

“August 2d. . . . Have proposed, and she has accepted—as I expected. Have I made a mistake? After all, it doesn’t matter so much. She is to mould herself to me, not I to her.”

And this was the good match, duly solemnized in the following autumn, from which sprang blight and bitterness to the life which I shall relate to those who have ears to hear.



in her eyes and such a rare glow upon her cheeks ! Even the cold, calculating groom by her side lost something of his chill and grimness, and smiled down upon her like a complacent granite statue, or a drawing in India ink partially warmed into life.

It was not plainly known whether the arrangement was satisfactory to all parties, but Mrs. Leonard did not go to live with her daughter at the Wayne place. There was considerable delay on the part of the bride in packing her few little personal effects for the transit ; and on the night before she went to her new home, I had a glimpse, as I ran round to their back door for one of our free and easy " kitchen calls," that showed me Elenor clinging to her mother's neck with all her Puritanic spirit of restraint melted in sobs and broken words, and that mother with more of the Christian martyr in her face than I had ever seen in her times of rheumatism.

I fled home through the orchard, resolved to call another time. On the following day the bride went to her home, and I had another glimpse—such a doleful glimpse—of Mrs. Leonard, leaning, silent and without appetite, over her solitary tea.

There is something very wrong somewhere, thought I.

Not long afterward there was a formal tea-drinking at the Wayne farm. After this the good

match dropped into the past, like every other happening, and was talked of no more.

When a year had passed away, and the cheerful Thanksgiving came again to the thoroughly devout town of Baywood, it saw the Leonard cottage standing empty and desolate. Elenor's mother had gone to a home — a lovelier and a more peaceful home than Austin Wayne with all his means, and Elenor with all her love, could have provided.

There were subdued under-currents of gossip hinting that Mrs. Leonard's last days had not been of the happiest or the most comfortable ; hinting that Mr. Wayne kept strict guard over all intercourse between the two homes, and that he was vigilantly careful that nothing found its way out of his own abundance into the poor little brown house from which he had taken his wife. But that he was occasionally thwarted in his economy, is shown by the following entry in Elenor's journal — a journal grown slightly brief and laconic in its entries, as if the proud spirit that penned them preferred to be reticent even there :

“OCTOBER 2D.

“ I was very tired after I finished the morning's work, but mother is so much worse, I could stay away from her no longer. I had a pair of pillow-cases which I made and marked with her initials, and a few clusters of grapes to carry to her. I

knew that Mr. Wayne " (in earlier portions of the journal she refers to him as Austin) "does not wish me to do these things, but—she is my mother. I had the basket on my arm, and was tying on my hat as I went through the hall, when he came out of his room —"

[I believe Mr. Wayne called this room his "library," because it had a few books, plenty of dust and cobwebs, an indescribable mustiness, and was never infested by anything save himself. If it *was* a library, it was not at all like the attractive one where my St. John writes his sound articles for the 'Medical Review,' and which he is quite willing to have dusted and garnished every Saturday morning.]

"— and said to me rather sharply, —

" 'Where are you going ?' "

" 'To my mother's.' "

" 'What is in that basket ?' "

" 'Something for my mother.' "

" 'Mother !' he repeated impatiently ; ' you seem ' to have nothing but mother in your head from morning till night. Weak natures are in reality never weaned. What are you carrying to her ?' "

" 'These,' I said, lifting the cover of the basket.

" 'Elenor,' he said, stepping before me, 'this charitable business has gone far enough. I want it stopped now and here. Give the basket to me !' "

“ I never heard him speak in quite such a tone, — so cold and hard and cruel ! It seemed as if an evil spirit suddenly filled my whole body, and flashed from my eyes and spoke from my tongue. I took one step forward, and said, ‘ Mr. Wayne, let me pass ! ’

“ I don’t know what frantic thing I would have done if he had not moved aside. He did so, but said very calmly as I went out, —

“ ‘ Very well, Mrs. Leonard will pay for whatever goes to her from my house — unless you are particularly successful in your stealing. ’

“ ‘ If you *dare* to make yourself so mean in her eyes ’ — I began fiercely, but my words ended in a sob. I wish I did not cry quite so easily. I am sure I never used to. Perhaps I can conquer this weakness by and by.

“ He laughed his low, brief laugh — more hateful to my ears than a curse — and I went on down the walk.

“ I tried hard to look cheerful as I entered the dear little old garden, where the maple leaves were beginning to flutter to the ground and the dark-eyed pansies looked at me with something like reproach, from the encroaching weeds growing up in their midst ; but I found mother suffering too much to give any heed to my troubled face.”

A few weeks later there occur these few broken lines :

NOVEMBER 30TH.

“ She is dead — my poor darling mother !

“ This is the first moment I have felt I could write even one word.

“ Hér last hours wére without pain ; and her last words were — ‘ I am so glad you have a good home — I am so glad I don’t leave you all alone in the world ! ’

“ Once I thought that with a husband’s love I should never feel sad or lonely, though all other blessings should fall away from me. But I feel, now, so terribly *alone*.

“ I thank God for this : she never knew how unhappy I was.

“ And in your beautiful heaven, O mother ! may you never know how unhappy I am now ! ”





CHAPTER IV.

AUSTIN WAYNE AS A HAPPY FATHER.

IT was almost eleven o'clock on a stormy evening in December, and the Doctor had just wound his watch, removed his dressing-gown and kicked off his slippers, when there came a moderate footfall crunching along the walk, and a moderate rap upon the door.

"Dear me ! I hope it isn't very far off — such a night as this !" I murmured rather vaguely from my already drowsy pillow ; but the Doctor, who has no weaknesses when duty calls him, cheerfully stepped into his slippers again, and went to the door.

I caught only the words " Mrs. Wayne."

" It is Mrs. Wayne ?" I called, as the Doctor closed the door and the moderate footsteps went crunching back to the street.

" Is it a message regarding that individual, my dear Genie."

Genie is the short for my somewhat stately name of Genevieve.

"Then I'm going!" said I vigorously getting up.

"You can't!"

"I can!"

"You shant!"

"I shall!"

Understand that we never quarrel—the Doctor and I. We only state facts to each other in a sprightly and spirited way, and sometimes one is the victor and sometimes the other. In this instance I won.

"The most crotchety and unmanageable woman I ever saw!" commented the Doctor, pulling on his right boot while I hurriedly commenced dressing.

I like to see the Doctor attempt to be cross—it is such a brilliant succession of failures with him. Before he had put on his muffler and I had buttoned the last button in my cloak, he was calm and radiant as if it had been the dearest wish of his heart that I should go out into the night and storm with him.

"You see I feel *impelled* to go, my St. John!" I said in self-justification, as the door closed behind us, and a dash of the fine frozen mist hit me in the face.

I always notice that when I confess myself "*impelled*" to do anything, the Doctor offers no remonstrance.

"Very well ; you may be of assistance, perhaps." And putting my hand under his arm, we set out briskly for the Wayne farm, half a mile distant.

Everything was strikingly dark and quiet in the house that had just sent for a Doctor. One faint light became visible, however, as we drew near, and that was in an upper room.

We entered the hall, after waiting a moment for a response to the knocker, which failed to come, and walked forward into the sitting-room. A dying fire showed the apartment to be vacant of everything but its dark, stiff furniture and dreamily ticking clock.

While the Doctor removed his overcoat and brushed the sleet from his beard, I went upstairs and knocked lightly at Elenor's door, whence the ray of a lamp proceeded.

A faint voice said, "Come !"

Elenor, herself as white and motionless as her own pillows, and a little dark head half visible beneath the counterpane, was the vision that greeted me as I entered.

"Is it *you* ?" she said. "Thank God !—maybe you can help the poor baby to live."

"Good Heaven ! Where is Mrs. Griffin ?" I asked vehemently.

Mrs. Griffin is the village nurse, and is considered as indispensable as oxygen itself to the

existence of the newly born. Her absence was a terror to me.

"I sent for—that is, she came this afternoon; but—we thought she wouldn't be required so soon, and—she went home again."

"You don't tell me you are all alone!"

"Yes—but only for a short time. Mr. Wayne went to the Doctor, and then for the nurse. He didn't think—well, I've done the best I could!" with a faint, bitter smile.

"And now we will make you so comfortable, dear!" I said, with forced cheerfulness; and then I slipped out of the room and went swiftly down to my St. John, who had taken the liberty to light the candles that stood on the mantle-shelf.

"Genie, you are as white as a ghost! Is this the nerve—"

I waived all pleasantry.

"There's a whiter ghost upstairs, John! The poor girl has been alone all this time, and there's a little mite of a half-dead baby on her arm. Good conscience! is this the civilized town of Baywood, or is it—"

The Doctor thrust me aside and went upstairs, leaving me to decide at my leisure what Baywood was.

At this instant moderate footsteps came up the

walk, and, after a careful use of the door-mat, Mr. Wayne entered the hall.

"Mr. Wayne!" I said in a fierce whisper, and I am not sure but I stamped my foot, "the baby is born!"

I expected to see this message level him as if it had been a cannon-ball; but he merely lifted his hand with a slight gesture of surprise

"Is it a boy?" he asked, leisurely pulling off his overcoat.

"Boy!" I echoed, with increased ferocity. "I don't know, sir! We have but just arrived. We are going to determine, *first*, whether the mother and child are alive. You must be aware that she has been quite alone all this while!" and again I looked for a heavy fall.

To do him justice, he looked, for a moment, slightly flurried. Then he stood gazing at the candles, thinking how he could crush me and my fussy indignation by his own high, calm views of life.

"A truly great mind is never really alone," speaking in a voice as of self-communion, concluding to view the situation intellectually.

"I am not speaking of truly great minds, but of common de—," I began fast and furiously; but I was cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Griffin, who came rushing in, a compact tornado of cloaks and

wraps, her round face glowing and her keen eyes glistening like blue stars. She had dressed, and walked from home, and was only three minutes behind Mr. Wayne, — almost a neck-and-neck affair.

Nurses' tongues are always more or less at liberty to say what they please; and after I had acquainted Mrs. Griffin with the facts of the case, I left her making some plain, unvarnished statements to Mr. Wayne, which that man received as a bronze statue might receive the attacks of a gadfly.

As I entered Elenor's room, the Doctor was dropping medicine into a teaspoon and calling the patient a very brave woman — which praise she at once refuted by fainting dead away.

Mrs. Griffin came and bore off the baby to its doom of raiment — it is one of the penalties of being born that one must be clothed — saying she would "save the *child*, at any rate!" and as she said it she looked broadswords and cutlasses in the direction of Mr. Wayne, who lurked interrogatively about the chamber door.

The wonderful drops from the teaspoon presently revived the patient — calling her back from the shadowy gateway through which she had almost drifted. I had never before noticed that she was beautiful. Perhaps it was because she

had been so near that mystic boundary where all true and noble souls shall receive their beauty as by a baptism.

"Let her be kept very quiet. Let her have rest and sleep and all possible repose of mind and body. We will trust everything to her youth and her constitution."

The Doctor murmured the words in the lowest tone, but Elenor's ear caught them. She opened her eyes listlessly and uttered those saddest words that fall from mortal lips: "I don't care to live!"

"You have the cunningest little girl!" came the cheerful voice of Mrs. Griffin from the next room. "Eyes just like yours! And shall I put her into a frock or a night-gown?" Artful Mrs. Griffin! What a tonic was in her words.

"A frock—the frock with the lace edge and white ribbons," answered Elenor, with a little flash of womanly vanity.

The Doctor looked at me and smiled hopefully.

The frock with the white ribbons was got out, and sundry little squawks and gurgling cries told that the baby was suffering its first toilet.

Mr. Wayne entered the chamber. I object, as a general thing, to the treating of happy fathers as if they were assassins; but in this particular instance I confess I frowned as Mr. Wayne came to the bedside.

"How do you find yourself?" he asked, with a manner that said, "I suppose these affairs must receive some attention."

Elenor lifted her clear, dark eyes to him — with a very queer expression in them — and said gravely, "I am very well, thank you."

And then Mr. Wayne retired.

"Now try to sleep," said the Doctor, placing his large, white, kindly hand upon her forehead, "and don't say you don't care to live. It is brave to live."

"I wish to see the baby before I try to sleep, then," as if reluctantly consenting to remain in the world.

After awhile the baby was brought in, looking as sweetly as possible in its over-large clothes and intensity of color, and Elenor clasped it to her breast, kissed its shining hair, and dropped two great tears — not of joy — upon its face.

"I am so silly!" she said, glancing up to me with an air of apology.

"You are a lovely mamma," I replied, with such emphasis that the Doctor instantly drew me out of the room, saying there must really be strict quiet.

Then we all went softly downstairs. Mr. Wayne had replenished the sitting-room fire, and by its light was brooding over "Latter-Day Pamphlets."

He closed the book as we entered, and then said to the nurse :

"Mrs. Griffin, I have kindled a fire in the kitchen; will you be good enough to make some tea for the Doctor and his wife before they go out into the storm again?"—an extremely polite way of hastening our departure.

"Don't trouble yourself," said the Doctor. But the Doctor's wife does not turn so readily from a cup of tea, when it is two o'clock on a stormy winter morning; and so she said, "John, let's have some tea!" and Mrs. Griffin added, "By all means!" and led the way into the kitchen.

Mrs. Griffin, in a very short time, set forth the bubbling teapot, some exquisite bread, glass dishes of Elenor's superb canned pears, and a festive loaf of queen's cake. The kitchen, like all Baywood kitchens, was a marvel of neatness, and everything seemed to have been placed in readiness for this somewhat select revel. It is a custom here, indeed, to set forth little suppers on occasions of this kind, and housewives vie with each other in the excellence and nicety of the bill of fare.

The Doctor—if you can once make him consent to a cup of tea in the small hours—enters into the revel cheerfully. So we three gathered around the spotlessly white cloth, and while the fire crackled and the tea-kettle sang and the teaspoons tinkled

and the canned pears melted away, Mrs. Griffin discussed the situation.

"You see I came over this afternoon — Mrs. Wayne sent little Kit Brown for me — and when I came and had got my things off and my knitting work out and all nicely settled for a cozy chat with *her*, what does Wayne do but come in and glower around like a thundercloud; and after hanging about the room awhile he says, says he, 'Mrs. Griffin, I'm to be at home this afternoon, and when *you're* wanted I'll come for you! It's not necessary that you should waste so much of your valuable time.' — as much as to say I might leave, and the quicker the better! I tell you I *was* riled; but for *her* sake I told him — just as if I didn't know what he meant — that I had plenty of time and to spare; and I'd thought for a long time I'd come and make Mrs. Wayne a regular afternoon visit; and so I kept on with my knitting. I thought the old skinflint wouldn't say anything more; but he went and muttered something to Mrs. Wayne, who was clipping off dead leaves from a rose-bush in the window, and I saw her look at him for a minute as if she was just completely thunderstruck, and then she turned to me with face all white and drawn like, and says she, 'Mrs. Griffin, you may go home, if you please, and I'm very sorry to have troubled you.' Law! I knew how

it was! He was afraid I might ask an extra shilling or that he'd lose a meal of victuals. I had as good a mind to slip around into the back door and stay with her, after all, as ever I had to eat. Some more tea, doctor? No? Well, his tea doesn't choke *me*! Fact is, you can't touch some people in anything but their 'substance!' I like tea, but to-night I'm particularly fond of it. He! he! He can't choke *me* off with his stinginess. I'll drink all the more; as for getting huffy and acting on your dignity, it pleases such people too well. Mrs. Wayne will have to find *that* out, I guess!"

"Poor girl!" said the Doctor and I simultaneously; and the Doctor added, "She always struck me as being rather of an extraordinary girl, fine-grained, intelligent, and modest, too. I should notice her among a hundred of our Baywood women. But her husband—he seems to have just brains enough to be a foo—"

I am the only person in our family allowed to make ferocious and unguarded remarks, and I laid my hand upon the Doctor's mouth. But Mrs. Griffin set down her cup with gentle emphasis, and remarked that it was just what she had always thought.

After the lunch we went upstairs, the Doctor saying that the baby must not be allowed to worry

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the patient, and found both patient and baby softly and soundly asleep.

Leaving his directions with Mrs. Griffin, the Doctor then invited me to go home with him — which I did.





CHAPTER V.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



CHILD to a wedded pair is either a bond or a barrier between them. Happily it is usually a bond. To Elenor and Austin Wayne it was a barrier. They regarded the little waif stranded upon the shore of life at their feet with as different eyes as if one were looking upon it from Heaven, the other from Hades. To one it was a poor, helpless, lovable mite, very sweet and blessed to the heart so badly disappointed in its one grand dream of love. To the other it was a troublesome, unimportant girl-baby, who created vast expense and had no business to be anything but a boy.

A boy, to be named Austin Wayne, Jr., and to be brought up after his own correct ideal—this had been Mr. Wayne's great expectation. And here was this little good-for-nothing, the perfect image of her mother—and inheriting all her mother's foibles, no doubt—come to scatter his plan to the four winds! It was a disappointment which even his philosophy could hardly soothe.

At least he would make her reception prosaic enough. *He* had no rhapsodies to pronounce. *He* had no thrills in his heart over the mere fact of being "father." He would regard the baby in the strongest practical light. He would see that, from the very first, she should have no flummery about her. To this effect he announced next morning, as nurse was warming the young lady's feet, and Elenor was eagerly watching her from among her pillows, that she should be called "Mehitable."

"Law! don't hamper the child with a name like that!" frankly exclaimed Mrs. Griffin.

"I have selected another name!" said Elenor, with that sweet calmness so irritating to natures like Mr. Wayne. This opposition but gave zest to his admiration for the name of Mehitable. He was seized with sudden affection and reverence for a long dead aunt—passed into those realms where I trust such ugly names are forgiven and forgotten—and Mehitable had been the name of that unfortunate relative.

After a brief discussion, ending in a silence on Elenor's side, that might or might not have been acquiescence, the name was considered settled upon the little voyager for life.

"You can call her Hittie, you know. Hittie is not such a bad name," said the nurse consol-

ingly, after Mr. Wayne had gone out, and the sunlight seemed to come back again.

"I wished to call her Genie, for the Doctor's wife; but it makes no great difference. She is the same baby, you know, whatever the name may be,"—turning a fond glance upon the little *Mehitable*, who continued to rub her rose-red feet together and to square off at the air with her microscopic fists, in superb indifference to these personalities regarding her.

"And I am sure I wish to have Mr. Wayne pleased," Elenor added, bravely trying to hide away this little new bitterness from the nurse.

Mrs. Griffin gave a snort of disdain which she instantly turned into a chuckling caress for the baby, and said with jocular asperity that she should like to see her husband undertake to name a baby of *hers* against *her* inclination! Who, pray tell, did a baby belong to, body and soul, if not to the mother?—the mother who had dreamed night and day of it, and worked for it, and lived for it, and almost died for it!—and then not to be allowed to name it! Goodness, why didn't Mrs. Wayne stand up for her rights?

"Why, since baby is all mine, I can afford to let the name be Mr. Wayne's," Elenor had answered.—"I ought to be generous enough for that," with a little laugh.

Here the baby received more caresses, between which nurse muttered she had always believed there was such a thing as being too good, and that she would just like to hear of a baby named **Mehitable Griffin** !





CHAPTER VI.

BLUE RIBBONS.



R. WAYNE sometimes descended from his abstract meditations and emerged from the cares of his large farm to the noticing of very small things. Not the small things which delight many natures, such as the carol of a bird, the opening of a flower, the tints of a cloud, a golden bit of landscape, a song, a sunbeam—all the minutiae of the Beautiful opening every day to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear—no, nothing of this kind ever reached the soul of Austin Wayne.

The primrose was “a *yellow* primrose,” and, if it was in his way, it was very generally a crushed primrose—“and nothing more.” The small things which Austin Wayne noticed, he noticed with malice prepense. He was the natural enemy of the robin, until agricultural reports hinted that the bird ate baleful worms as well as cherries. He was instinctively down on the sunlight until some book came in his way which spoke of its

powerful sanitary influence ; and then he immediately fell upon a noble elm that had shaded his house for two generations and cut it down, while every stroke of the axe seemed, as the Doctor truly remarked, like manslaughter. He would pursue a squirrel to the bitter death ; he could even switch butterflies to pieces if they came within range of his whip ; while every straggling pansy or wandering marigold that dared to suggest itself amid the sober prose of the vegetable garden, was seen, pounced upon, and uprooted before it could say, " I am."

But the epauletted blackbird, singing his song of laughter in the rushy meadows, the wild bees carousing among orchard blooms, the leaping of the " foam-shod brooks," the dreamy, summery call of the locust, the sensuous glory of the rose, the face of innocent, angelic childhood — these things never caught his eye or held his ear.

Yet he could bring himself to arrest Elenor's basket of grapes for her sick mother, and to the naming of a very small baby in direct opposition to one who had the better right to such a sweet privilege. There were still smaller things which claimed his attention.

Little Hittie was three months old, and the ribbon-knots on the shoulders of her immaculate frocks were still a charming feature of her toilet.

It is immaterial whether it is called foolishness, vanity, or a love of the appropriate; but Elenor was very particular about these knots. I had often seen her adjust them, and then put the baby off at arm's-length to see if the effect was as perfect as possible.

One day Mr. Wayne seemed to become suddenly aware of the blue ribbons. Elenor had finished the baby's toilet, and tied her, fresh as a lily newly blown, among pillows in the rocker at her side, that she might talk to her as she worked, and had taken out her sewing and was singing and talking to baby in the most rollicking manner—and baby was understanding every word—and the March sunlight was pouring in at the windows, making bright greens among the lily-leaves and bright crimsons among the perpetual roses—when entered Mr. Wayne.

It was such a bright little picture for a husband and father to see, that a certain grim pleasure stole over him, in spite of himself, and the numerous details of the picture that had so astonishingly affected him began to pass under his inspection.

"How long are you going to keep that nonsense on her shoulders?" said he, poking the blue bows with his finger, not speaking sharply—he seldom spoke sharply—but with a mild contempt.

It had not entered the happy mother's head that

the ribbons were ever to be laid aside, or that they even came under the head of nonsense.

"Why — are they not becoming?" looking up with a suddenly clouded face.

"I don't like the popinjay style!"

"This is not popinjay style! A simple ribbon, like this, on a baby, is no more popinjay than that rose yonder!" said the fond mother, with some warmth.

"There is this difference, however — the rose is natural, the ribbons are not. If you take that ground, the child should have been born with the gewgaws already on her shoulders!"

"Were you born with your clothes on?" queried Elenor.

"I never argue with a woman," said Mr. Wayne; "but there's another difference. The rose is the natural production of such inexpensive agents as soil, light, air, and water; and the ribbons" — bending his head, and speaking with a hissing emphasis — "*cost money!*"

For all reply, Elenor calmly untied the blue knots, and walking to the fireplace dropped them upon the coals.

Mr. Wayne slightly elevated his eyebrows. "It betrays shallowness of character — trying to trick out Mehitable to an exact pattern of other children. I'll have no child of mine fooled with in

such a way. A simple dark frock is the only sensible dress; and I should like to see Mehitable wear it." He took a subtle pleasure in calling that little combination of dimples and dark eyes and long floating frocks by the name he knew to be disagreeable.

Elenor said nothing, but sat down to her work again; and the baby crowed and caught at the sunlight in a vague, uncertain way, and cared not a straw for blue ribbons so, suddenly transformed into ashes,

"As for burning the ribbons,—you ought to know that you simply beat yourself, with this devil's temper of yours. You—simply—beat—yourself!" repeating the words impressively, and taking a book from the mantle-shelf with an air that said, "Let me get away from this narrow atmosphere."

I noticed the remarkable absence of Hittie's ornaments. Elenor said she would be going out in her little carriage soon, and she was to wear sacks with sleeves, and be a sensible baby.

Have patience with this small talk. It is only one little "straw," indicating that the wind hung east constantly, in the nature of Austin Wayne.

Little Hittie was a blessing to Elenor, and doubly a blessing. No matter how sombre or troubled the days—compared with those her girl-

heart had pictured—this little loving life was always pouring sweetness and gladness into her heart, garlanding every care, dulling the edge of every sharp pain, making her yoke easy and all her burden light. As little by little the wife's heart unwound itself from the husband, the loosened tendrils caught at this later love, and clung to it passionately and idolatrously.

Mr. Wayne saw this, and had occasion to make the following entry in his journal :

“When a woman marries and becomes a mother, she stagnates at once—gets set fast in a pool of small distresses; and so far from any growth of mind, or any strength of character, she might as well be any animal in the fields. In fact, she has that same blind, furious instinct which all animals exhibit regarding their offspring, and which is subject to no reason or control.”

Doubtless it was this “blind, furious instinct” which brought Elenor to our door one night when little Hittie was a year and a half old. She was pale as ashes, panting for breath; and after uttering these hurried words, “Please come to the baby at once, Doctor!” she turned and fled back through the moonlight like a spirit.



CHAPTER VII.

MEHITABLE'S TRANSLATION.

THIS abrupt summons came as the Doctor and I had just seated ourselves to our late tea—late, that is, for Baywood, where every one sups at six, summer and winter. I, however, like to have the lamplight floating o'er, giving a glamour of festivity to this prosaic meal; and so we were late, as usual.

The things were unusually attractive—something from the West Indies, just opened, and one of Mary Jane's magnificent efforts in the way of cream biscuits; and I was just poisoning the teapot over the Doctor's cup with its lump of sugar—which I have learned to calculate with almost superhuman accuracy—when this pale vision of Elenor suddenly stood in the door and as suddenly fled again.

Years of severe schooling will never make me reconciled to these continuous small bereavements of mine—having the Doctor snatched from me in the brightest moments of domestic felicity! When it is washing-day, and Mary Jane trans-

forms the kitchen into a vapor-bath room, and I overturn all the bureau drawers and disembowel all the closets—that I may have the pleasure of putting things to rights again—then I can see the Doctor borne off with the most heartless equanimity. In fact, to see him vanish is a pleasure rather than otherwise, for there is no affinity between men and house-righting. But to be settled for the evening by a bright fire, with a new book to be read aloud—or, what is of more riveting interest, the Doctor's last essay to be dissected; to be up to our elbows in the proper transplanting of tomato plants, or the artistic disposition of verbena beds in the garden; above all, to be just seated, hungry and happy, at the serene tea-table—especially when there's chow-chow and cream-biscuits—ah! these are the times that try my soul.

No, this schooling not only fails to teach me that patient resignation so becoming in the female character, but it renders me frightfully impatient and unfeeling toward the ailments of my fellow-creatures. From time to time I catch myself making such brutal remarks as these: "Now why under the sun couldn't Mr. Smith have broken his leg at some other time?" or, "What evil genius put it into Mrs. Jones' head to have pneumonia just on this particular occasion?" and again, "Why

couldn't Tommy Brown have had his worm fit yesterday?"

Something equally ugly sprang to my lips on this occasion — because babies are always contriving to scare mothers out of their senses, when there is nothing very particular the matter with them, after all. But I set the teapot down, put back the accurate lump of sugar, and in silent gloom watched the Doctor put on his hat and take his cane.

"Don't wait for me, dear," said he.

"*I* can wait, but the biscuits can't. Don't you think you had better have your tea before going?"

My St. John glanced at me briefly without speaking — he has concluded not to waste words in defence of that sacred principle, duty — and went out. Bereft, as usual, I placed my chin in my hand and looked at his vacant chair.

When I had conquered this slightly bitter mood, Elenor's words seemed to ring in my ears again. "That dear little Wayne jewel has probably got in a terrible fix with a double tooth, or maybe she has fallen downstairs and mashed her cunning nose," I said to myself, as I carried off the biscuits and tea to the fostering influences of the kitchen fire. "Mary Jane, just treasure these tenderly for fifteen minutes; and, if we are not

here by that time, make some more tea. I am going after the Doctor."

At a flying pace I soon overtook him. "I will never desert Mr. Micawber!" making a clutch at his sleeve and securing him.

"I should like to know, madam, why you're dogging my steps in this fashion?" said the Doctor, with mock ferocity, glaring round upon me in the moonlight.

"I'm afraid something serious is the matter; I can't wait to know; it's such a pleasant evening; I don't want to have supper alone; and—"

"And, on the whole, you are impelled, are you?" And the Doctor conclusively surrendered his arm.

So together, as once before, we entered the gate of the Wayne place.

"Come upstairs, please!" called Elenor from above, as we reached the hall; and her voice still had its strange ring of anguish.

She was standing by the baby's cradle, looking down upon it, as we entered the chamber. "Tell me at once if she is going to die!" looking at the Doctor with eyes that were almost fierce.

The Doctor did not touch the little hands tossed high above the head, or inspect very closely the strangely white face of the child. But I saw that look in his eyes which is so sad to see in the eyes

of a physician. "Why did you not send for me before?" he asked.

"Send—for—you!" repeated Elenor, slowly. "Mr. Wayne left my message at your house this morning?" in a questioning tone.

The Doctor turned to me, fearful that I had allowed the message to fall short of him—something which, bereft as I may be, I have never done, and I am proud to say never shall do.

"I was home every moment, John, and to my certain knowledge there has been no message left."

Elenor turned very white, and a sudden rage flashed into the anguish of her eyes.

"God punish him!" she said, in a choked voice; "he said he would call for you—he led me to believe that he had seen you—that you would come this afternoon—"

"Elenor," interrupted the tranquil voice of Mr. Wayne, who had come softly upstairs and heard no good of himself, "you are beside yourself, or you would be careful how you misrepresent my words. I did say I would see you, Doctor; but *Mehitable* appeared so much better this morning, I was inclined to think your services would not be required. I decided, if she grew worse, to call for you this afternoon. I hope there is nothing alarming in her case."

"*She is only dying!*" said Elenor, looking steadfastly at Mr. Wayne with eyes that a lioness might possess when she sees her young ruthlessly slain before her.

"Let me speak with you a moment, sir," said my St. John, in that suppressed tone that bodes no pleasant utterances to Mr. Wayne. The two went out of the chamber, the Doctor closing the door. What he said to Mr. Wayne will never be definitely known; but the man very soon returned, his colorless face a shade paler than usual, and stood looking down upon the baby. I knew the Doctor could wither him if anybody could.

Mrs. Griffin came up from the kitchen, bringing some idle, useless herb-drink which her medical skill had suggested.

"And how do you do, Doctor and Mrs. Graham?" she said, coming near and regarding the baby attentively. "Now I call that a sick child—a very sick child, Doctor!"

"But she will soon be very well!" said the Doctor, in his tenderest voice.

"I understand—she is dying!" said Elenor. "Can't you give her something that will take the pain away, and let her go at once? How can I see her suffer? How can *you* see her suffer, and give her no help? Give her medicine that will

bring, sleep—at once—for God's sake!" in the same fierce, anguished tone in which she had first spoken.

The Doctor took out his case of medicines, and dropped some liquid into a spoon. "If she can swallow this it may help her," he said.

"Hittie, little Hittie!" called Elenor, lifting the child tenderly in her arms.

At the sound of the voice, first and last the dearest on earth, the baby turned her great brilliant eyes upon Elenor and faintly smiled. The Doctor placed the spoon to her lips, dropping a little of the medicine upon her tongue. The poor darling only struggled and gasped, yielding her breath—

"In bird-like heavings unto death."

"We had better not distress her," sighed the Doctor, as the baby essayed to push the spoon aside.

"Let me take her, Mrs. Wayne," said Mrs. Griffin, coaxingly. "Oh, the poor little dear! give her to me, and go out in the air—do; you are ready to faint!"

"No one shall take her from me," said Elenor, in that low monotone, more fearful than sobs and moans. "I wish you would all go down and leave her with me—alone. Take away the glasses and spoons, Mrs. Griffin: they trouble her; she thinks

she must take more medicine, and she hates it so ! I will carry her to the window, where she can breathe the sweet summer air, and see the bright, bright stars — she always loved the stars. Go down, please, and I will call if — if anything is wanted," waving us away.

"It is just as well so," said the Doctor ; and, as once before, we all went down stairs, leaving mother and child alone.

"I knew it, I knew it," said Mrs. Griffin, in her low, nurse-like undertone, as she went about, snuffing the candles, and restoring order here and there, while Mr. Wayne paced slowly up and down the porch, and the Doctor and I sat on either side of the fireplace, as empty now of light and warmth as the little body upstairs would soon be empty of *its* light and warmth.

"I always knew it," she repeated, regulating the last chair, and finally dropping into it. "In the first place, she is too bright to live ; and then, there's been signs in this house not to be mistaken. First one was this : about two weeks ago I run in to get Elenor's receipt for making sponge-cake, and noticed her looking particularly solemn-like ; and by and by she says, 'Mrs. Griffin, do you believe in dreams ?' 'I don't know,' says I ; 'sometimes I do, and then again I don't. What have *you* been dreaming about !' It was some

time before I could coax her to tell, but finally she said she had dreamed of being in a great city, with little Hittie running along before her, and she having to walk fast to keep up with her. I can't begin to tell it as she did, but it was somehow like this: Little Hittie kept running on and running on until she came to an open space where there was nothing but fresh dirt—it's an awful sign to dream of fresh dirt—as if the street had been just spaded up. Little Hittie ran out on this with her little toddling feet, and began to sink—sink—sink, very slowly, and all the time keeping her face turned toward her mother, and laughing and shaking her curls, and never seeming to mind the danger.

“And, just as it most generally is in dreams, her mother couldn't reach her, couldn't follow her, but could only stand still and watch her sinking and sinking, and when the last little sunshiny curl went under, she woke up. She laughed a little when she finished telling it, but I could see it fretted her, as well it might. This was the first sign. Then, two or three days ago, what does the baby's glass mug—the mug that used to be on the mantleshelf there, and which she was so fond of playing with—what does it do but fly into half a dozen pieces, and nobody nor nothing near it—only Mrs. Wayne happening to be looking at it across the

room! I wouldn't wonder if there's pieces of it on the shelf this minute—yes, so there is!—it just fell in pieces as if struck by a mallet, and never a crack in it, as Mrs. Wayne knew. I call *that* singular—very. But the most dreadful thing happened to-night; you've noticed their old Maltese cat—twelve years old, if she's a day, and no more given to pranks than Deacon Snyder. Well, it was about dusk, and I was coming out of Mrs. Wayne's room to go downstairs for candles, leaving her singing to the baby, when there came the awfulest, dolefullest yowlin' down by the hall door, that I ever heard in my life. I looked down, and there was that old cat trying to drag something long and white up the stairs. Law, what a start she gave me! I went down and snatched it away, and give a kick that made her *yow* for something—I do hate cats, anyhow! And what do you think it was the critter had? *It was a sheet!* Where on earth she got hold of it, unless she dragged it out of the clothes-yard, is more'n I know; but there it was, a heavy, white linen sheet, with old Mrs. Wayne's name worked in the corner. I didn't say anything to Mrs. Wayne. I just carried up the candles, and when I saw the baby's face, I knew death was in this house. Mrs. Wayne gave a kind of distressed groan, and went and laid the baby in the cradle, and says she, 'The Doctor

must come!' and then she was downstairs and out in the road like a flash. I actually believe she wasn't away from the child ten minutes. Yes, I knew it! I knew it!" sighed the good nurse, retrospectively. "And it will be such a blow to her, poor thing!"

"When was the baby taken sick?" asked the Doctor.

"Yesterday morning, she tells me, and growing worse and worse every minute, and Wayne all the time declaring that it was nothing but her 'teeth,' and that sage tea was all she needed, and putting off going for you until the last minute, and even then *she* had to go, and did go, and was back again in less time than Wayne would take to put on his hat. I believe that man, under all his evenness and calmness, is as ugly as Satan, there!" indicating the direction of the porch.

"I understand it all," said the Doctor; "but perhaps nothing could have saved the child, in the face of your signs!"

Mrs. Griffin winced a little, but said there were some very strange things connected with this life that everybody hadn't found out yet.

The Doctor admitted this.

Just then a clear, soft lullaby came from the room above us — a little cradle-song which we have

all heard, and which I had heard many times since the baby came to Elenor.

"Oh, for mercy!" groaned Mrs. Griffin. I went around to the Doctor, and slid my hand into his. "O John, my heart aches so for her!" And John pressed my hand silently, and the footsteps ceased pacing the porch, and we all listened and waited.

"Hush, my babe, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed."

No words can express the pathos of these old words, and this old air, as Elenor sang to her dying baby. Once there was a falter in the clear, soft, pain-quivering voice, but it gathered strength again and went on bravely to the end.

Then, after a little silence, Elenor called to us, "You may come up, now."

"*She* will die, if she is not brought out of this condition," murmured the Doctor, as we went upstairs.

It was all over. The child lay in Elenor's lap, very still, and very free from suffering, forever.

"She spoke just one little word before she went," said Elenor, "and that was 'sing.' I couldn't sing it as I used, and I am afraid she knew the difference; but it is all the same now—it makes no difference—no difference."

Mr. Wayne went to Elenor's side, and put his

hand on the dead child's forehead. Elenor drew the little head away from his touch, with an unconscious, shrinking gesture.

"You will believe *now* that she was sick," she said, looking up with dry, glittering eyes.

If Mr. Wayne had dropped one hearty tear of grief or contrition, what a saving clause it had been in his biography! Even with his cold, unimpulsive nature, I thought it possible he might break down over what must have been to him an unexpected bereavement. But his philosophy was triumphant even here.

"Whatever is must be right," he said, and I will do him the justice to add that his voice had a slightly mournful cadence.

"Yes; whatever is must be right!" echoed Elenor, as if speaking in a dream, smoothing the baby's curls with an untrembling hand, and looking in her face with wide, tearless eyes.

"Now, Mrs. Wayne, let me take it," said Mrs. Griffin. "You will make yourself sick; you mustn't act in this way, really. Let me do all that can be done now, Mrs. Wayne."

"It! Why do you say 'It'? But you are right; a moment ago she was little Hittie, now she is only It. Where is she, then?" looking around upon us for answer to a question that is not easily answered.

"Let me," coaxed the nurse, putting out her arms for the baby.

"What is to be done? Oh, you wish to dress her and make her beautiful for the grave—the ugly grave and the ugly grave-worms!" still clasping the little white face closely to her breast.

"Nellie,"—I remembered her mother always called her Nellie—and I knelt beside her, "Nellie, how can the ugly grave hurt little Hittie? how can it hurt her any more than it can hurt a sun-beam? The little life has gone up higher. Let us have this dear, darling bit of dust, and go and make it beautiful, as you say."

Elenor looked at me for an instant, as if waiting for my words to be understood by the brain that was being so shaken and tortured, and then laid the little form within my arms.

"Yes, take her, Mrs. Graham; you know what is best. But—you said to me once you were afraid of—of—dead bodies; you won't be afraid of this one—no one but my little Hittie, you know, and she was always so fond of you!"

So I lifted "it" in my arms.

"I will go out in the air—I believe my head aches. I will go out in the night and look at the stars—her stars!" Murmuring the last words to herself, she flung a shawl carefully about her shoulders, and went calmly from the room.

"Who would have thought she would take it so easy!" exclaimed Mrs. Griffin. "And yet I'm afraid it's not so easy, after all. It's this still sort of grief that *hurts*, let me tell you!"

"Perhaps you had better go with your wife," suggested the Doctor, anxious, as I could see, for her perfect sanity. Mr. Wayne slowly obeyed what should have been his own suggestion. On the breast of a noble and tender-hearted husband her great grief might have flung itself, and through its floods of tears caught, perchance, some ray of the Eternal Sunlight — some glimpse of the loving Lord who does not needlessly afflict His never-forgotten children. But what sort of a breast was Austin Wayne's for grief like this to lean upon?

"John, you say so many good and soothing things, I wish you had gone to her," I said, vaguely feeling that her husband's presence would only add darkness and bitterness to her mood.

"Thank you, Genie, but I believe *you* are the best of comforters;" and the Doctor and I, in this shadowy room of death, exchanged glances of solemn tenderness, feeling, with this beautiful dead child before us, that life had not yet held any very bitter cup to our lips.

Yes; I own that I was once afraid of dead bodies. Early in life the fact that a room had once contained a "body," made me extremely shy

of that room after sunset. And as for looking at a body — while the whole neighborhood put on its best things, and eagerly attended funerals, and as eagerly pressed forward for a glance into the coffin, I would have buried my head in the earth, or drowned it in the sea, rather than have looked on what they did. Death was a horror, and everything pertaining to death chilled my blood, and made even the gay sunlight seem a ghastly pall.

My good mother never knew what I suffered, when, one fine day, she absolutely coerced me into the procession following the remains of a loved and honored citizen, and was even so thoughtful as to lift me up that I might, before the coffin was lowered into the grave, have a fair view of the drawn, shrunk, fearful face of the deceased. Doleful hymns were sung, I heard the rattling of the lumpy earth upon the coffin, and then, my good mother leading me away, I cried out in a sort of frenzy, that I never, never would go to another funeral until I should go to my own! My mother was shocked, and suffered me to keep good my vow for months and years; but never once, when the lamp was carried from my room, and I was bidden "Good-night," did I miss the thought of that ghastly, confined dead.

When I grew older, when those I had known and loved went the way of all the earth, then the

Angel of the Shadow put off something of his terror, and I caught glimpses, sometimes, of a Visitant who **was** not always ghastly and horrible, but who came at **wise** bidding, and put touches of peace on troubled brows, and strangely sweet smiles on lips whose smiling, had they lived, was over.

Yet I never lost all my old fear and dread until I came to take the little dead Hittie in my arms. **The** dimpled, cherub form, every inch of it dearer to her who bore it than her own heart's blood; the sweet features, with the beauty of babyhood, touched with the majesty of this last slumber; the long-lashed eyes, not open and vacant, but closed as if in sleep; the matchless little hands, idly drooping, idly empty, as though life were a play-thing, carelessly tossed aside for something better—it was this, if anything, that made me “half in love with death,” that led me to call him “gentle names.”

“I can do everything that is to be done here,” I said to Mrs. Griffin, “if you will go down to the parlor, and make it ready for the darling.”

The parlor—the room of state in these quiet farm-houses, and which many people seem to keep formal and chilly for this very purpose—was straightway prepared. Candles were lighted upon the high mantle-shelf; and the old mahogany table,

that had borne more than one burden of death, but never one so beautiful as this, was wheeled into the centre of the room, and covered with one of the heavy linen sheets that are heirlooms in Baywood families.

"It seems incredible that any true woman could make a display of temper at such a time as this!" said Mr. Wayne, returning to the room after a brief absence.

"Mrs. Griffin hasn't the sweetest temper that ever was, I admit," said the Doctor, who was assisting me in the baby's sad toilet.

"I refer to my wife," said Mr. Wayne, speaking with apparent reluctance. "Do you imagine this trouble has affected her mind, Doctor? I had hardly spoken one word to her before she turned upon me like a tiger, with such words and epithets as I've never before listened to. I know her disposition to be ungovernable; but I never saw her so furious as at this time. Don't you think she should take something quieting? or is it simply the working of this unfortunate temper of hers?"

"John, do go down and talk to her! I've nothing to do now, but brush her hair. And Mr. Wayne, will you be kind enough to walk over to our house and send Mary Jane to me? It may divert your mind from Elenor's unfortunate temper;" and I tried not to speak very ironically.

Two or three neighbors who had known of the baby's sickness came in before I had quite finished making golden rings of the child's bright hair, and volunteered their assistance ; but I persuaded them to see that no more help is needed, and that it would be best for Elenor that the house should seem as quiet as usual. After admiring the "beautiful corpse," and exclaiming in wondering whispers of Elenor's remarkable manner — for she still sat on the porch making calm replies to the Doctor, her eyes as clear and glittering as the stars on which she gazed — they compassionately bade her good-night, and went home.

And then little Hittie was carried down and laid in white stateliness upon the draped table in the dim parlor ; and Mrs. Griffin and Mary Jane put away her cradle and her playthings, and all the little odds and ends of baby life, transforming the sick room into the same cool, orderly, formal apartment it used to be before ever the baby came to it.

Elenor came in when everything was finished, her hair damp with the cool May night air, the pale, stony sorrow of her face still unbroken.

"I will sit here to-night," she said, drawing a chair near the snow-white bier. "You have done everything as I would have done it, only I never curl her hair in that way. I like it best — so,"

twining the rings anew. "Now will you all say good-night?"

"Nellie, I wish to stay with Hittie for a while," I said soothingly. "You are very tired, and you will make me so happy if you will go to bed and try to sleep. Come upstairs with me, poor child!"

"You are very kind, Mrs. Graham!"

"Then try to reward me, dear! Let me sit by Hittie. I will call you when you have had a little rest. Come!"

She passively rose to her feet.

"Good-night, little Hittie! good-night. For the first time you have slept out of mamma's arms!" in a tone that brought tears to our eyes. Then she stooped and kissed the face, replaced the covering, and put out her hand to me.

"I will do whatever you say, Mrs. Graham."

After she was in bed I brought her an opiate which the Doctor had prepared for her.

"Will it make me forget?" she asked, eyeing the glass wistfully.

"It will help you to sleep a little."

"A little — only a little! and then I shall wake and feel this same cold hand on my heart — forever — forever! If God is good he won't let me wake again!" drinking the medicine.

"You can't believe it, now; but you will some-

time see that He was good when He seemed most cruel. And then you have something to live for still."

"Ah! that is what I thought when mother died. I thought I had still something to live for; and now that something is dead. Everything dies—everything will die."

I laid my hand caressingly upon her head. I had no words to comfort such grief as this. "Good-night, dear," I said at length.

"Good-night; and don't forget to call me—soon. I have never left her long, you know. She will miss me!" giving me a warning glance from her strangely bright eyes.

Half an hour afterward I was infinitely glad to find her in deep slumber.





CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE THE COFFIN CLOSES.

THE May morning came up in blue and gold. The robins, with their breasts of flame, sang in the budding maples ; and the south wind, bearing hints of violets and the faint odors of woodlands, stole through open windows like an unseen spirit, and breathed in the ears of slumberers its soft " Awake ! "

Like a spirit it fluttered in the white curtains that shut the sunlight from the room where little Hittie lay, so that now and then a bright, laughing ray got in and played about the white bier, and rested its light hands upon the little golden head ; but no eye opened to its winsome greeting, and the ear was deaf as stone to its gentle whisper.

Not a tiny grass-blade in the meadow, not a lonely flower in the mountain forest, but thrilled with royal life on this fair, fresh morning ; but in this room lay something sweeter than leaf or bud, to which the life of earth, in its gladness and beauty, should come no more.

Upstairs, the morning laughed in remorselessly through the windows upon another sleeper. When I went softly into the room the sunlight was falling full in her face, and an irrepressible robin was trilling on a bough just outside the window, as if cruelly bent on rousing her ; but still she slept on.

I closed the blinds, and went out as softly as I had entered. In the kitchen the great wheels of living were revolving in an orderly and noiseless manner, under the supervision of Mrs. Griffin. The two farm hands came in to breakfast in a subdued manner, and Mr. Wayne, buried in a newspaper — that innocent shield which can cover all emotion, whether feigned or real — was gently addressed thrice before being made aware that the repast awaited his attention.

By and by, some children whom I had sent to the woods for flowers — I had nothing half so sweet among my plants as that wild darling of New England, the Trailing Arbutus — came in with their baskets of buds and blossoms, and went away to school as fast as they could. There is nothing attractive to childhood in the house of death.

I filled vases with the flowers and placed them at the head and feet of little Hittie, and laid them on her breast and wreathed them in her

curls. I was doing this work when I heard Mrs. Griffin say, "Good-morning, Mrs. Wayne," and looking about I saw Elenor standing in the door, almost as pale as the little form I had been decking, carefully dressed, her hair brushed smoothly away from her forehead, and the sharp, glittering anguish still in her eyes.

"The horrible dream is true, then?" she said, as if speaking to herself.

I had read that sometimes the clothing a child has worn, a crumpled dress, the little worn shoes, —something to bring vividly to mind the lost one, in all its sunny health, and play, and laughter — would bring tears to fond mother-eyes, even after long years had passed. Might they not bring relief to this sorely smitten heart? I felt that she must weep or go mad.

"Which dress will you have her wear to-morrow?" I asked abruptly. "Shall we go and look them over?"

She turned, and told me to come with her and see what there was. "Hittie hadn't many dresses, for Mr. Wayne —"

She did not finish the remark, but opened the first drawer in the bureau where the baby's things were kept. There were the daintily-stitched garments of Hittie's early days, all outgrown — but going to be useful again before long — scented

with rosemary, and of that snow-white perfection which marks the painstaking housewife. Then she opened another drawer. Here were the short clothes. Little skirts frayed with creeping ; long-sleeved aprons, with the sleeves considerably worn — as if a baby couldn't work as hard as anybody ! — mittens, blankets, mended stockings ; and in one corner a gay little sack, lately worn, the sleeves bent in the graceful curve of the plump arms they would never cover again.

Elenor gazed at this little garment for a moment. Then, with a smothered cry, she lifted it and folded it to her breast, and pressed her lips to the broided sleeve. “ My little girlie—oh, my little darling girlie ! ” she cried, sinking to the floor, and burying her face in the scarlet folds. And then I saw that her grief had found expression. Tears had come, tempestuous, convulsive ; but better than dry, burning eyes, for that poor mother.

I kissed her, with sobs tearing at my own throat, and went from the room with something like thanksgiving in my heart. Hours afterward she came down to us. I went with her to look at the beautiful, slumbering child. She replaced a spray of arbutus that had fallen from the unmindful little hand. By and by she said, “ I have been looking far into the future, and — it is best as it is. I was selfish last night. I can see now that she did well

to turn aside from this life. She is mine still, you know; but mine in a sweeter home — oh, so very much sweeter than this could ever be ! ”

The day of the burial came. Little Hittie lay in state, the white casket garlanded with flowers, her own face blossoming forth whiter and fairer than the lilies and the hyacinths I had placed about her.

It is not much one can do, when one would express affection for the dead, but impotently cover them with flowers and give them splendid burials. Meagre deeds, when life, but a while before, was so teeming with opportunity for loving acts ! Ah ! it is better to render loving service while the friend is in life ; while we can gladden the heavy eye, or send a sunbeam into the desponding heart. Better to render loving service while the warm, yearning soul journeys beside us, hungering and thirsting, than wait, and withhold, and put aside, until kindly death supplies the need, and puts his firm, cold hand between us and what we would do — oh, what we certainly *would* do — if it were not too late ! The needy heart is proud, and it will not ask for love ; but I know that in its secret depths it would choose a little more inexpensive affection while in life, and rather less splendid contrition after death.

Even little dead children sometimes have something more than grief wept over them. Remorse mingles its bitter drops. The good, patient mother—good and patient as you thought her to be, and as she thought herself to be—can recall, as she bends above her lifeless child, this and that act of impatience, this sharp word, or that angry blow, that brought the grieved lip and the big tear and the swelling heart to the darling, now as far removed from her tenderness as from her impatience; and those relentless lost opportunities will throng around her—the mother who was thought so just and tender—and she will see, too late, how that brief life might have been made a little more joyous, a little more sweet. Death must come very near to us, taking away the life of our life, before we can see

"What golden grain we trample low"

in the complacent selfishness of our daily life.

Mr. Wayne had tolerated little Hittie, simply. But now that she was snatched quite away from him, he was not certain but he had lost a very fine little girl. If the child had lived he would have gone on tolerating her, prepared to endure her if she would only refrain from disturbing his slumbers, tearing the newspaper, or wanting new clothes. Like the singing bird, and the woodland

brook, she was welcome to stay in the world so long as she gave him no trouble. But she was dead now ; and even he, whose affection hardly existed, save in theory, could not but miss the bright face at the window and the sound of little feet about the house.

He wished, on the whole, that she had lived. On this day of the burial he had a pensive mood upon him. Elenor, her passionate soul cleared and softened by its storm of tears, looked at him, with sad, gentle eyes, and longed to call back the fierce words she had cast at him, since he, too, suffered. He was walking to and fro in the hall, his head bowed, his hands idly clasped behind him. After all, he must feel this grief, and she was more than heartless if she could not regard him kindly in such an hour.

She went to him, and said in a very sad, but almost tender voice —

“ Austin ” — and it had been a long time since he had heard that name from her lips — “ won’t you come and look at her, before the people begin to come ? ”

Mr. Wayne never obeyed a suggestion readily ; so he walked up and down the hall a few times, while Elenor waited his answer, and then moved moodily toward the parlor.

Side by side the two stood looking down upon

the fair picture of death. It was hardly possible not to be touched by it. But Austin Wayne — when the fascination of the little marble face would let his eyes wander from it — began to notice the setting of the picture.

“ Our little Hittie ! ” said Elenor softly, holding out her hand to her husband. He took the hand apathetically, and gazed gloomily upon the garlanded casket. Was his grief so deep, then ? Oh, that she might comfort him ! that she might, at least, recall the ugly words she had said to him on the night of the baby’s death ! She regarded him with pleading eyes, and was about to speak again, when he suddenly dropped her hand, and exclaimed, —

“ Even here — even in the presence of death ! ”

“ What do you mean ? ” faltered Elenor.

“ This flummery ! ” said Mr. Wayne ; “ this tricking and trimming of the dead ! I thought *you* were above such unutterable folly ! ”

“ It can’t be folly, putting beautiful things about her ! She is so sweet herself, how could she be covered with anything more appropriate than these flowers ? How can anything be made too lovely for our darling ? ” Something like reproach sounded in the low, gentle tones.

“ But the coffin,” said Mr. Wayne, with gloomy

sternness, — “that need not have been so expensive!”

“Ah!” and Elenor shrank from him, regarding him with scornful eyes. “You, rich as you are, can count the cost of this death!” a great sob rising in her throat. “I tell you, Austin Wayne, if every drop of blood in my veins could be transformed into something of beauty for this darling body, it should be shed!”

“As much as to say you are like all other women — ready to push your love of display into the grave itself!” sneered the man.

“My — love — of — display!” repeated Elenor, as if she could not have heard him aright. Then motioning him away, “Don’t stand by her side, please! You will blight the lilies! It will be time enough to-morrow to estimate their cost!”

“Try to restrain your temper, Elenor, at least; since it can only react upon yourself,” dryly.

Elenor ventured no reply, and presently Mr. Wayne walked from the room. Thus, even in death, little Hittie but widened the chasm between the husband and the wife.



CHAPTER IX.

EUGENE SEVILLE — MINISTER.

THREE years had passed away, touching with light, indistinguishable touches our staid town, making its old elms no older and its gray houses no grayer, only leaving their imprint on human faces here as elsewhere.

Baywood is a picturesque place, or rather its surroundings are picturesque: forest-crowned hills, velvety valleys, and a wide brawling brook, almost a river at times, that falls asleep in little lakes here and there, turns a mill or two, and finally slips out of hearing between the wooded hills.

Saratoga, Nahant, and Niagara are all very well. Baywood is a quaint, secluded, unpopular little spot, found, by the few recreation-seekers who drop down here, to be really far ahead of any of the places above named for quiet repose, fine hunting-grounds, productive trout-streams, good fare, attractive scenery, and moderate terms. Only those people come here who are or wish to be on the best of terms with Nature, who want to

shake off the dust of their toiling lives and breathe deep. So, while it happens that nearly all the fools and a great many sensible people take to the crowded seaside and the famous springs, we of Baywood are sure to net a pearl of great price, such as some enthusiastic artist, some thoughtful-eyed poet, some wearied book-maker — yearning to live a romance rather than write one — or some intent man of science, who hammers our rocks and carries off our rarest beetles and butterflies.

This summer there came a blonde-haired, sapphire-eyed man, who, I was sure, had dropped from the skies, when I answered the knocker one divine morning in the first of July, and saw him standing framed in the vines that clambered about the door, his hat off, the sun shivering its light lances among his fair curls, and his vivid violet eyes resting pleasantly upon the lady of the house, who rudely stared at him.

“I have walked from the station this morning in search of some little halting-place for the summer; I believe I have found it. Can you tell me where I may be likely to find — board?” and as he said it he smiled slightly, as if enjoying my surprise that such a glorious phantom of delight should talk of board. The word recalled me to my not altogether inhospitable self. I proffered

him a chair in the shadow of the vine leaves—it is a ten-mile walk from the station—and said I would give him the names of those who would be likely to accommodate him. But would he not have a glass of milk with ice, or—some coffee? I faltered, not quite sure that this radiant apparition would accept anything less than nectar, or some ambrosial beverage of the gods.

"Thank you, thank you, I am too hungry not to accept your kindness," he answered with a look of hearty gratitude in his eyes.

Our breakfast was not yet cleared away, and the coffee was still hot on the kitchen hearth, and there was a biscuit or two, and we had spared at least one dish of strawberries; and, if this bright mortal would eat ham, there was ham. Not to multiply words, in two minutes this elegant way-farer sat in my dining-room, drinking coffee from my best china, and eating broiled ham with much avidity.

"You are Mrs. Dr. Graham, I presume,"—how kind of him to remember our humble door-plate! "My name is Seville—Eugene Seville," bowing graciously and then biting a biscuit with eminent gusto.

"And you like our place, Mr. Seville?" I asked, rather proud of being a citizen of a place that could please such a splendid traveller.

"I have fallen quite in love with it—love at first sight, at the moment I reached that bend in the road yonder, where the town and its laughing river and its brave old elms opens upon the eye like a picture! This is my first morning in the country for one long year, and what has become a harmless wine to you is intoxicating to me, — the air of these glorious hills!"

"You are an artist!" I involuntarily exclaimed.

He smiled at what seemed a Yankee-like query. "No; or if I am, I am an artist without expression! An artist with a soul-full of lovely landscapes and beautiful faces, never to find their way out to the defrauded world. No, I am not an artist, — worse than that, madam," as much as to say "Guess again."

"A writer, then, I am sure; only that is not *very* much worse," and I glanced affectionately at the "Medical Reviews" in the book-case, wherein Dr. John Graham figures as a writer.

"Alas, no!—I am a minister, — only a minister, Mrs. Graham!"

"Ah!" said I, suddenly inclined to throw on a serious Sunday manner.

"You are surprised, I see; you wonder why, being a minister, I am not far gone with dyspepsia and given over to dry toast and black tea; or why I don't say grace over your delightful coffee."

I expressed myself surprised, indeed, at these striking deficiencies in a minister.

"I have resolved to have nothing to do with dyspepsia; for I believe no dyspeptic is fit to act as an interpreter of God's truth. He will always contrive to work in a little of his own bilious alloy. As for saying grace, there are occasions when the service becomes beautifully impressive; but I don't fancy the idea of making a speciality of gratitude. Our lives should be all gratitude—grateful in joy, in sorrow, in work, in every breath we draw!"

I gazed at the joyous young man,—he could not have been very much past thirty,—with his pure, bright face, and the brave, sterling manliness lighting it from within, as the lamp's flame illumines the transparent shade that covers it, and fancied a new leaf had opened to me in the slightly dreary volume of my acquaintance with "ministers." What pulpit, I wondered, was being defrauded by this rural roaming?

"I wish I could in truth say with a certain great man, 'the world is my country and to do good is my religion,'" he continued, as if reading my thought; "but I have to narrow myself down to this statement: New York is my home, and to loaf among the woods and fields is my present occupation."

“And you prefer this dull little valley to the White Mountains or Cape May?” I said, looking out upon this same little dull valley with ill-concealed pride.

“For the very reason you think I would fly to those places, I shun them. I am just a little tired of full-dress life. I would like to get near to blessed Nature, to sit at her feet, and see if my ears have grown dull, in this long year, to her still small voices. Lovely berries!” he exclaimed, as if resolved to talk no more of himself. “Picked this morning, weren’t they? and almost the last of the season? And this cream! Do you know I was raised—as the Western phrase is—on a great dairy farm, and have never yet been weaned from cream? You would think New York’s soulless milkmen would have accomplished the business, but they have not:

“‘I have struggled to forget,
And the struggle has been vain!’

There’s absolutely no knowing what I might be lured into if lured on by a pint of real cream!” laughing that quick mellow laugh which springs so readily from a genial heart.

There are many kinds of laughter in the world. A child’s laugh—how hearty and unqualified it is! trickling, like silver rain, in faint, exhausted tee-

hee's, or bursting forth in ha-ha's, "rich as woodland thunder," over his little jokes that are almost too funny to be survived. But the years come, and the laugh of the child is one thing, and the laugh of the man is another. In Eugene Seville the child's laughter seemed to have remained and grown up with him. In Austin Wayne the laugh of his childhood — if his childhood had any laugh — had quite died out, and a halting, reluctant, suppressed laugh, that seldom left its haunt in his heart, had taken its place. Even this laugh had hard work finding its way out of his throat, and always sounded as if the passage was cobwebbed and barricaded by the rubbish of disuse.

"This is such a fine old house, sitting back here among its elms, with its pleasant porches and broad windows, just for all the world like the music of Home, sweet Home congealed into tangible form!" Mr. Seville said, having finished the last strawberry and risen from the table.

"It is pleasant to *me*," I conservatively replied.

"Something tells me you wouldn't wish the perfect picture marred by the introduction of a boarder, and I shan't humiliate myself by giving you the opportunity to tell me so! But if you will direct me to some farm-house likely to afford me a room at night and an occasional dinner — providing I desert the woods long enough to dine —

you will doubtless spare me many painful rebuffs," waiting, hat in hand.

If I was ever tempted to "take boarders," it was on this occasion. Certainly he had saved me a painful task in not asking for board. I pointed out the houses of three or four well-to-do people who were in the habit of accepting our few summer visitors, and then some fateful power led me to call his attention to the Wayne farm, whose stately chimneys were partially visible through an opening in its great orchard.

"At one of those places I am sure you will find a pleasant stopping-place. And, Mr. Seville, I would like to have you know the Doctor;" and I am afraid I spoke as if there was nothing on earth like knowing the Doctor.

"I am confident I shall be pleased to know the Doctor—unprofessionally, please Heaven! And now I go. Thanks for your hospitality: 'Even as ye did it unto the least of these little ones,'" he quoted, with a beaming smile, and bowing gracefully he went swiftly down the walk. Near the gate I saw him stoop and tenderly lift the blossom of a white lily and gaze into it as into the face of a child. As he passed into the street, a bird flew soaring and dipping into the golden air, uttering its own blithe strains of "unpremeditated art," and he lifted his face to watch its joyous flight.

“ A pleasant combination,” I murmured to myself; “ a preacher — a man of high, fine thoughts, as a preacher should be — and yet the picture of health and brave beauty, sunny-souled, and all alive to the little gladnesses of existence ! And what a comfort it is to know that I shan’t be obliged to make dry toast whenever he comes to see us ! ”





CHAPTER X.

AUSTIN WAYNE AS A TUTOR.



FINE little hero, who had somehow escaped the name of Austin Wayne, Jr., had meanwhile established himself in the Wayne household, and was almost three years old, having passed successfully through the perils of teeth, whooping-cough, measles, and vaccination, and come out in his third summer, a solid young man, closely resembling his mamma, and fully inheriting — Mr. Wayne was pained to observe — her unfortunate sensitiveness of temper.

Child and mother got on very harmoniously together ; but between child and father there was an inevitable conflict from the first. I think there must have been an inevitable conflict between Mr. Wayne and any child ; but the conflict was particularly marked between Mr. Wayne and Thomas Carlyle Wayne—called Thomas by his father, and by his mother “ Carl,” and responding readily to both names, only to the one name he usually lifted a curiously reluctant and serious face.

I have tried to picture to myself Austin Wayne as a child. Older inhabitants assure me he *was* a child once, and crept about the dark rooms of this same Wayne farm-house, and went to school in pinafores in the same old school-house standing on the hill yonder. But what sort of a child was he?

Imagination staggers when I try to think of him as a red-cheeked rollicking boy, with a hearty shout on his lip and swift, joyous impulses in his heart. No, he must have been, in the first place, a surly, misanthropic baby, with his dinner always souring on his stomach, and pins always sticking him, and the colic always seizing him, and his morning naps always being disturbed, his hair refusing to curl, his teeth coming through with the direst difficulty, and yet enduring it all with the stubborn stoical gloom that must have been born with him. Later in life I imagine him winning laurels as the best scholar in school, learning his tasks thoroughly, not given to play, and quietly pulling flies in pieces and wringing the necks of young birds during his leisure hours. Through infancy and boyhood it is impossible to imagine him to be any other than this same tearless, laughterless, loveless Austin Wayne, who now proposed to take the little Carl into his hands and see if something couldn't be made of him.

There are many uncomfortable conditions in life, but that of the misunderstood, misgoverned Carl was peculiarly so. A being, with his own little tastes and little loves, continually snubbed and brow-beaten ! For it was evident to Wayne that, as his first duty, there was an unfortunate temper to be subdued in this child ; and he never lost an opportunity to snub and brow-beat him whenever an opportunity presented itself.

From the moment the baby arrived at the dignity of being tied in his chair and occupying a place at table, his tutoring began. He had his dimpled fingers severely rapped, before he was eight months old, as a penalty for "grabbing" at the table-cloth, and was repeatedly shoved away and turned ignominiously to the wall, for declining to sit up in a correct and manly manner and leave off pulling his pink toes.

One day, when Carl was nearly two years old, the first real combat took place. A severe frost on the preceding night had nipped several acres of young corn, and the favorite horse had been led limping from the stable ; and both disasters combined to make Mr. Wayne more than usually vindictive.

In the house there was presented a thrifty little domestic picture : Elenor at work among piles of bright carpet rags—we of Baywood pride our-

selves upon our rag carpets — and the young Carl rolling a huge red ball over the floor and chasing it in high glee. But somehow there was something peculiarly annoying in this scene of contentment to one who had lost a week's corn-planting and discovered spavin in his best horse. What business had this happy infant to shout and roll red balls over the floor? Plainly, none whatever. He caught up the gay ball and tossed it into the basket at Elenor's side.

“He will soil that; he may have a black one, if any,” — selecting one and throwing it to Carl.

And Carl, who thought scarlet the much more taking color, picked up the black ball and flung it spitefully away from him, making no attempt to conceal his disgust at the interruption of his sport.

“Pick it up, sir!” thundered the father. A hot flush rose to Elenor's cheek at the savage tone.

Carl declined to obey. *His* spirit was roused also; and the thunderous command met a response in the stamp of his baby foot.

Now was Mr. Wayne's time! “Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.” It struck him it was time to bend this twig a little. He uttered his command a second time, and shot terrifying looks at the insulted bit of humanity before him. I say insulted, because it is one thing to speak with

kindly firmness, and another to speak as one shouldn't speak to one's dog.

The knight of the red carpet ball retreated to his mother's side. Then came a leap at him, and a stinging snap on the ear: "Will you pick it up now?" No; thrilled with pain and his little face white with his effort at self-control, there was no sign of obedience. Mr. Wayne deposited another stinging snap on his ear, and then another, waiting after each infliction for the black ball to be picked up, and at each snap a sharp cry came from the baby's lips and a wilder obstinacy shot from his eyes. Greek was meeting Greek — only one was such a pitifully little Greek!

Elenor caught her husband's arm. "Come into the next room; I want to say something to you!" she said, holding it as a sacred creed that a child should see no differences between parents; and before Mr. Wayne thought to demur, she drew him out of the room and closed the door.

"I don't wish you to touch that baby again!" she said in a low voice, but with a fiery flash in her eyes.

"I shall take that devil's temper out of him, by your leave!" and Mr. Wayne dashed her hand from his arm and stepped back into the room, locking the door upon her.

"*Mamma!*" came the thrilling cry to her ears, as the child found himself alone with his enemy.

But no mamma responded. She was standing outside, very white and still, with very dangerous eyes fixed upon the locked door. "Now then, sir," said Mr. Wayne, "pick up the ball!"

A silence, a sharp blow, a cry, and then the command again. Little Carl was in a kind of frenzy. His head was not quite clear. Life swam before him a mass of carpet balls; stinging pain and a voice of thunder were about his ears. The father seated himself deliberately and drew the child over his knee. "We will see, sir!" Elenor heard him exclaim in a fierce voice, and down came his hand in dreadful blows. There was no lack of shrieks now, and in the midst of them the victim managed to scream in his frenzied baby-language —

"You *die* me, papa!"

"Obey me then!" in the loud unrelenting voice. "Go pick up the ball!"

Once more the silence — not so much as one step taken toward the terrible black ball — and once more the blows and the frantic "Papa, papa, you *die* me!"

"Now then!" putting the child down on his feet again.

This time there was a staggering movement for

the ball; it was picked up—actually picked up, and the father triumphant; and then little Carl cast it square into the fireplace, where a low fire was burning.

Father and child regarded each other one brief instant—the one cold, malignant, strong; the other in a fever of grief, passion, and despair.

“Come here to me!” said Wayne in a dreadful voice.

“*Mamma!*” came the appealing cry again, and Elenor stopped her ears and bit her lips till the blood started, as the cry ended in a smothered scream, and cruel, furious blows fell thick and fast.

“There!” thrusting the victim into a chair, “You’ll mind me with a better grace next time, I think!” and Mr. Wayne strode to the door, unlocked it, and confronted Elenor. “It would be well if you were served in the same way!” as he saw the white fixed anger of her face; “the same devil’s temper in both of you!” pointing to the smouldering ball in the fireplace.

“If it is a devil’s temper,” said Elenor, leaning toward him and speaking with set teeth, “you beware of it! You lay your hands on my child in this way once more, and you shall *feel* a devil’s temper!—such as you’ve never dreamed of!”

“I might have expected this,” said Mr. Wayne, regarding her with an expression in which com-

passion and contempt seemed commingling. "I might have expected you would try to counteract whatever healthy discipline the boy may obtain from me. But I imagine you will hardly succeed — rave and threaten as you may ! Now you can go in and coddle the obstinate whelp !" and with an ironical show of politeness he bowed, and withdrew to the stables for another look at the lame horse.

Elenor took little Carl in her arms. The child clasped her neck as with a death grip, and sobbed upon her breast, in a heavy, convulsive way, for long hours ; for even when sleep came to him, he still sobbed and shuddered, and Elenor observed that his ears were swollen and purple, and that his body bore livid marks of this his first conflict.

For a long time Carl gave his father a wide berth. If by accident he laid his hand on his father's chair, or upon his knee, he withdrew it as if the contact had burned him, and scanned his tutor closely, to be certain that he wasn't going to leap at him again ; and if he had frolicsome games with his mamma, his mirth was never so high but it fell to zero if he but heard his father's step at the door.

Mr. Wayne noted this cowering manner of the child, and audibly flattered himself that he had " taken a *little* of the devil out of him ! "



CHAPTER XI.

ELENOR'S "BOARDER."



UGENE SEVILLE appeared to have gone straight to the farm-house whose chimney I had pointed out to him. Although not equal to the Doctor's homestead, it was a very attractive place, particularly to those poet-hearts who like nothing so well as the quaint and the old. There was the broad sloping roof, unknown to the pert architecture of the present day ; rows of ancient poplars fencing either side of the narrow lane that led to it from the highway ; a great garden, stocked with such ancestral growths as hollyhocks, striped grass, cinnamon roses, rosemary, lavender, and sweet clover, and expanding in the rear of the house—a picturesque combination of lean-to's and wings—into beds of sage, and fennel, and mint, a modern patch of strawberries, old blue-plum trees and oxheart cherries, pluckily standing their ground against grafted varieties of fruit ; a row of bee-hives facing the orchards and the balmy clover meadow ; beds of honest vegetables—I do not know that a cabbage is more honest than a came-

lia, but it seems so, — and in the midst of it all the veritable old mossy well, of which so many of us have read, with its soaring sweep, rough stone curb, and away down, down in its depths, the clear waters reflecting the blue of the heavens, and rippled occasionally by a drop from the overhanging bucket.

It was one of those dear old sincere places that speak to one, coming from cramped city quarters, of "affluence, love, and olden time," when affluence was health and industry, and love was a principle; and life was pure and simple, though it were narrow and toilsome, and sober wishes never learned to stray.

Over the whole poured the summer sunlight, and the bees hummed and the cattle lowed in upland pastures, and the wind brought sweet odors from the hay-fields, as Eugene Seville opened the gate — his eager senses catching everything of beauty which the morning held — and came up the narrow walk, scattering the dew-drops that yet lingered in the hearts of the fringing pansies.

I know it would have been more tragic romance had little Carl been rescued from tumbling into the well or being gored by some ill-tempered bull; but it chanced to be nothing half so sublime that flung him into the arms of Seville.

He — little Carl — was roaming back and forth

among the ancestral shrubs, trying with endless failures to cover a butterfly with his straw hat; and hearing the gate close and seeing a stranger coming upon him, he started precipitately for the house, and made excellent time until one of his feet caught in the grass and brought him flat on his face with such force that, as Mr. Seville sprang forward and raised him, the blood was dripping from his little *retroussé* nose.

An elegant stranger, holding his own dainty cambric to the boy's nose, and soothing him with all manner of compassionate exclamations, was the spectacle that met Elenor's eye, as,

"Bare-armed, as Juno might, she came
White-aproned from the dairy,"

to see what calamity had befallen Carl.

"An extremely unhappy mode of introducing myself—frightening your child and then weltering in his blood, so to speak!" said Seville, still kneeling upon one knee where he had stooped to Carl, and looking up into Elenor's face apologetically.

"The grass did it," said Carl, sturdily, quite brave now that his mamma was beside him, taking out his own handkerchief and waiving any further aid from Seville.

"Thanks, you good little man! But what will mamma do to me for making you almost break your nose."

"Oh, *she* likes you!" said Carl, with great assurance, catching the unconscious admiration in Elenor's eyes.

This artless remark brought a little flush to Elenor's brow and a merry laugh from both.

"That is fortunate," said Seville, "for I have come a-begging!" and he thereupon gave his card and stated the object of his call; not forgetting to add that the Doctor's wife had sent him there—that he was a mere passive instrument going about and humbly obeying her instructions.

I think Elenor must have shared my dumb admiration for the prepossessing applicant before her, for she glanced at him without speaking, contrasting his brilliant and refined presence with the bare walls and uncarpeted floors of her spare rooms.

"I am afraid we have nothing that will suit you;" regarding him with a certain wistfulness, as if it would be very pleasant to have such a bright mortal in the house if the rooms only *would* suit him.

"I did not come into the country to have the country suit me, but to suit myself to the country. If I can't do that, then the fault is with myself; and a decidedly bad fault, too."

"I will first wash this gory little face, and then I will show you the rooms. Come in!" And Elenor led the way into the house.

There was a spare room opening off the parlor, quite grand with its old-fashioned bedstead, and the most wonderfully constructed patchwork quilt in Baywood ; its heavy bureau, with lion's paws for feet ; its several rugs made of very green stems and very red blossoms, sewed on in very stiff lines, as if some household artist had undertaken to show Nature how trimly things might be made to grow, if Nature would only take the requisite pains ; and its walls and ceiling tinted in a deep, melancholy green. Everything had remained the same as when old Mrs. Wayne's dying eyes wandered around the apartment, taking their last look at the things into which she had stitched so many golden hours of life.

Seville involuntarily shook his head at this room. "I see there is but one window, and that faces the north. I had rather live in the garret, if that garret has a window facing the sun. This room is very elegant, to be sure ; but I do love sunlight !"

Elenor turned her applauding face to him. "I knew you would dislike the room ; I do. There is something in it suggestive of—"

"—the grave ?" said Seville.

"Yes, the grave," with a slight shudder.

"It is singular how the thought of the grave affects us, when we know all the time that we—our *real* selves—have nothing to do with it. It

sometimes seems as if we felt we were to end altogether in that gloomy 'last ditch'!"

"What proof is there that we may not?" asked Elenor, her fair, round, forgotten, bare arms folded behind her, and her dairy apron quite ignored in the deep problem under consideration.

"Very few proofs, d—" Seville came near saying "dear child," it was such an earnest, half-sad, half-appealing young face that was turned toward him. "Very few proofs, Mrs. Wayne, but one great Faith, and that is here," touching his breast. "The old legends and the old vision-seers prove nothing. It is the great infinite yearning soul in us all, that is its own oath on immortality. Any sort of soul were good enough if this life were all. The universe, boundless as it is, has no waste. You may be sure no rich and beautiful soul will be put in the rag-bag of oblivion!"

Elenor shyly drew his card from her apron-pocket. Yes, it was *Rev. Eugene Seville*. "I never heard a minister speak in this way," she said, with a smile.

"Then it is because your ministers dig so much among musty sayings of old, instead of listening to the voice that speaks every day, whose utterances—But this reminds me that I am really preaching, when I've forsworn sermons for twelve

Sundays. You have a room not quite so gloomy and peculiar, somewhere in this great house, I am sure."

"There is a room upstairs which has sunlight in it, and little else," laughed Elenor, leading the way, and now remembering to put down her sleeves.

Yes, there was a room facing the east, and looking down upon a cherry-tree, with, as Elenor said, little but sunlight in it. There was a bed suggestive on trial of climbing Mont Blanc, a bit of muslin curtain at the window, and two forbidding wooden chairs that said, "You may sit down certainly, but we won't answer for the consequences!"

Elenor had made an attempt to soften and modernize this primitive old house; but softening and modernizing "cost money," and the revolution had been squelched by Wayne at the outset; therefore the severe plainness that marked the house under the reign of the elder Mrs. Wayne was still dominant.

"I—like this," said Seville, though, to be truthful, the room did not quite approach his idea of what a farm-house chamber might be, with the natural advantages of sunlight and cherry-trees. "I can make myself very comfortable here. Of course *I* furnish the room," kindly assuming that no effort had been made in this direction.

"The walls are bare and glaring," said Elenor deprecatingly.

"A brown Holland shade will soften them; and they are much better as they are, than when hung with poisonous-colored paper."

"And there is no carpet," Elenor continued, in a regretful voice.

"A carpet is a guaranty of perpetual dust, madam. I prefer this spotless maple floor, and this single rug with its marvellous rosebuds," trying to conceal the smile that played about his mouth as he surveyed the rug in question.

"If you please," said Elenor with a suddenly grave face, "it will be necessary for you to speak to Mr. Wayne. He may not—you will find him in the hay-field which I will point out to you," turning to go downstairs.

There are people whom at first sight we like. We do not fall violently in love, but we like; and Eugene Seville liked this sweet-voiced, dark-eyed young hostess—who, it seemed to him, was merely masquerading in this white-aproned, short-sleeved dairy costume, and was prepared at any time to step forth in more regal robes.

"I like to have agreeable people about me, if I have any," was his thought; "and if Mr. Wayne, like Barkis, is willing, then I seek no farther."

Mr. Wayne was willing. A happy quotation

from Carlyle, which Seville let fall by the merest chance, clinched his hold on Wayne's good graces at once ; and leaning on his rake for a few minutes—that he might not appear too eager for the pecuniary inducements held out to him, that gentleman said yes.





CHAPTER XII.

SEVILLE ESTABLISHES HIMSELF.

THERE was no mistaking the fact that Seville liked to have agreeable things as well as people about him. Nothing bleak or bare — unless it was the grandeur of bleakness, like the mountain tops — ever found favor with him.

“I have some luggage at the stage office to be looked after, and some little matters of shopping to attend to. Your dinner hour is at noon, I suppose? I shall appear punctually at that hour.”

At noon a wagon drew up at the carriage-gate, containing some articles of furniture extravagantly selected from the best our one shop afforded — huge roll of straw matting, and a trunk lettered “E. S.,” large enough to do honor to any belle of Saratoga. On the top of this trunk sat Seville with a box, suggestive of a carefully treasured guitar, under his arm.

“And now,” said he, after he had helped the man carry the things upstairs, and the plain but nicely served dinner was over, and Mr. Wayne had

gone out to see that the workmen did not extend their nooning three minutes beyond one o'clock, "now I have work — housework — to do; and to make the impersonation of houseworker complete, I suppose I must tie a handkerchief over my head and be very cross," suiting the action to the word, and making little Carl giggle, in spite of his bashfulness, at the grotesque appearance he made.

"The girl and I will arrange your room, if you will wait until this inevitable work of clearing away the dinner is over," said Elenor, lending her smile to Carl's laughter, and involuntarily contrasting this merry, light-hearted man with Mr. Wayne, who was guiltless of merriment and light-heartedness as any ancient owl croaking his solemn incantations in a midnight forest.

"By no means!" Seville answered briskly. "I'm too selfish to yield to any one the pleasure of the work I have before me. I love such work — bringing order out of chaos and making slight attempts at the beautiful! Not to say that you wouldn't work with much better success, and thanking you kindly," courtesying with the handkerchief still on his head, "but I — oh, goodness me! the carpet tacks! I've completely forgotten the carpet tacks!" a comical distress on his face.

"A provident, thoughtful way of going about your work," said Elenor with assumed severity.

"I can't see but you will have to do what no really good, thrifty housekeeper ever does—except in extreme cases of yeast. You must borrow!"

"I am willing to submit to the disgrace of borrowing," said Seville humbly, after a little reflection.

"Fortunately, I think I have a package in the house, else you would have a mile's walk for your thriftlessness!" and Elenor flitted away, and presently flitted back again with the tacks and a volunteer hammer. Seville took them and bustled from the room, then put in his head to say with mimic querulousness that he couldn't possibly see visitors during the afternoon, and then he jocosely caught up little Carl, saying he wanted him for a carpet-stretcher, and carried him upstairs, singing as he went—the child looking keenly into his captor's face, not quite sure whether he was to stretch carpets or be eaten alive, but inclined to think that everything was rather pleasant on the whole.

In an hour Carl came down from his gigantic efforts at assistance, and seeing that the coast was clear of his father, asked for bread and butter. After the bread and butter was eaten, he gradually worked his way upstairs, and timidly lifted the latch of Seville's door.

"How came you here, then?" asked Seville curiously.

"I was a little spec 'way up in heaven once; and I grew and grew and grew, and by and by, *pop!* I dropped down to mamma!"

Seville flung aside his hammer and laughed heartily, while Carl seized the opportunity to drive a tack all by himself.

"Who told you of heaven, you little cherub!" asked Seville, gently recovering the hammer.

"Mamma told me one day; and there's a baby up there and her name is Hittie. She was here in this house once. But she's gone back. I *dess* she didn't like papa;" throwing out the remark merely as a conjecture.

Seville, in spite of this absorbing conversation, eventually got the matting put down. That done, and the gilt-bordered shades hung at the windows, it did not require much time to bestow the handsomely painted furniture about the room.

"My back aches with making such a bow of myself. I'll go to the woods and breathe awhile," he said to Carl, taking his hat and carrying the child from the room and running lightly downstairs with him. Carl watched him leap the fence as if it were a skipping-rope, and disappear in the orchard. Then Carl sought his mamma and told her that Mr. 'Ville had hurted his back, and was

going into the woods to make a bow-arrow, he "dessed;" which information was somewhat doubtfully received.

When Seville returned to his room at dusk, a candle in a brightly scoured brass candlestick was burning on the table. Fresh water and a pile of snowy towels occupied the toilet-stand, and a bouquet of pansies and rosemary filled the apartment with delicate perfume.

As he went downstairs—and before going he placed a bit of rosemary in his button-hole—he found the table laid for one, Mr. Wayne brooding sombrely upon the porch, and little Carl gleefully taking a bath at Elenor's hands in the back kitchen.

"Am I so late?" he asked, glancing at the solitary plate, as the girl brought in the tea.

"We have supper at six, sir!" called out Mr. Wayne, a little stiffly, as if he would like to add that Mr. Seville had better have supper at six also, instead of roaming upon the hills.

"So did I sup at six, on sweet woodland air and a view of your lovely valley," said Seville with enthusiasm, "and I must acknowledge the repast has given me a fine appetite for some bread and butter and a dish of tea, by way of dessert!" seating himself at the table.

As Carl came in *en route* for bed, looking strik-

ingly lovable in his damp, clinging curls, and white night-gown, Seville called him to his side and told him he was a little Trojan, and kissed him on the forehead.

Mr. Wayne saw the act, and whether he was jealous or only particularly irritable, an expression of keen contempt suddenly contracted his features. I suspect the little caress struck him as evidence of "flummery."

"You are fully settled by this time, I suppose?" said Elenor, after she had seen Carl to bed and returned in time to pour a second cup of tea for Seville.

"I have accomplished the first rude touches. To-morrow I put on the high lights. I have two or three pet pictures, some books, and a few trinkets, of no value except to the owner, to unpack. The big trunk, which you may have observed, is my portable civilization —"

"Which you carry with you when you go into barbaric regions like Baywood!" interrupted Elenor.

"I do not mean that," with an increased color for the apparent rudeness of his words. "It was a badly chosen word. I mean that I bring from the city a few things that are not usually found growing spontaneously in the country; trifles that I am attached to — such as my poets, my guitar,

and my little chromo gems. I ought to have said that the trunk is a sort of potable home."

"I accept the amendment in behalf of Baywood," said Elenor.

"Do you like the guitar?" asked Seville.

"Yes." Elenor always spoke with certain constraint when Mr. Wayne was within hearing. "The Doctor's wife has one—the only one in Baywood, and the only one I have ever heard. It is very sweet music—on moonlit summer nights."

"The piano is best—to my liking—but not quite so easy to carry about," said Seville. "So when I go roaming I take my guitar—just as one carries a photograph of his beloved!"

"It will be very pleasant to have music in the house, I am sure;" and the delight in Elenor's eyes said more than her lips did.

"I will bring it down at once, while the young moon is shedding an appropriate light for you. I have several new songs; but the old are usually the best."

Seville brought the guitar, and seating himself on the porch, sang. He had a wonderful voice—soft and low, and clear as some delicious womanly contralto—well-suited to the light accompaniment and the still, moonlit hour.

"From grave to gay" rose and fell the melodi-

ous thrumming on the fragrant summer night. Finally, softly striking a deep minor chord with a touch like velvet, he began a plaintive song—a song of some little child who died in summer-time :

“Sing, Robin Redbreast,
 Tho’ you fill our hearts with pain !
 Sing, bonny Robin,
 Tho’ our tears fall like the rain !
 For a lamb far from the fold
 In the wet and wintry mould,
 For a bird out in the cold,
 Bird alain ! bird alain !

“Sing, Robin Redbreast,
 For we love your song so brave,
 Tho’ you mind us of a Robin
 Where the willows weep and wave.
 To her little grave it clings,
 With the rain upon its wings,
 And, for all its sadness, sings
 By her grave—by her grave !

“Sing, Robin Redbreast !
 You are welcome to our door.
 Sing, darling Robin !
 Merry larks no longer soar.
 Autumn comes with feel of rain,
 Mournful odors, wail of pain —
 There’s a bird will come again
 Nevermore — never more ! ”

As his voice, which expressed the full meaning of these grieving words, trembled into silence, Elenor dropped her face into her hands with a heavy sob. She had hardly heard the Doctor’s wife—who plays light, characterless airs, which may cheer

but never inebriate the listener—sing and play like that! Seville heard the sob, and felt the tears leap into his own eyes.

“Excuse my wife; she is foolishly sensitive in regard to some things,” said Mr. Wayne, easily shaking off the effect of the music, and addressing Seville in a low tone—low and distinct enough to reach the ears of Elenor, who abruptly left the porch, and disappeared within the shadows of the hall.

“I beg a thousand pardons if I have recalled anything that is so sad to her!” and Seville’s voice had the sound of a caress in it.





CHAPTER XIII.

SEVILLE'S CASTLE IN THE AIR.

IT was pleasant to have Eugene Seville in the house. I know of no greater compliment that can be paid to a man or a woman than to say they are pleasant to have in the house. There are many very clever, good people who stay in our houses, and still we hear the doors close upon them, and their footsteps die away, without one particle of sadness or regret. They are not disagreeable people — very far from that; but they radiate no sunshine, no life. They are like the cat purring contentedly on the hearth. Puss makes an agreeable picture, and, if well-bred, she is by no means troublesome; but we are willing that at any time she should go away and hunt mice, nor would we be grieved if she stayed away all day.

Those are very dear, rich-natured people, whose comings give our hearts thrills of expectation, and whose goings take a little brightness out of our sunshine.

Such a nature was Seville's ; and he shone forth with special brightness against the dark background of Mr. Wayne's house. I say Mr. Wayne's house, exclusively, for Elenor Wayne's house would have been a very different affair ; something of brightness, and gladness, and perfume, and song, if she could have had *her* way. In this house — which had little attempts at cheer, here and there, but was pervaded all through by the master's presence, as if it were a subtle malaria that could not be shut out — Seville came and went like a beautiful bright flame, and the gloomy, poisonous damps rolled away, and home-joys — hitherto wan and pale as plants that grow in cellars — brightened and grew into something like sprightly life because of him. There was about him a tender frankness that could cut to the heart and never hurt ; a genial audacity, carrying him, swift as light, to words and deeds that other people never thought of doing or saying — or, if they thought, never dared. Blended with this bold, bright nature, was a softer, humbler one — the nature that led him to lift a broken lily as tenderly as if it were really alive and felt the pain of its crushed stem ; that led him to take little Carl in his arms and talk to him on his own level of wonderful baby-thoughts ; that led him to do those trivial kindnesses — so trivial that most of us over-

look them — for everything and everybody around him, as if — though never seeming to see — he was all eyes. He had the keenest observation united with the best of wills. A blessed combination; for who has not seen good-hearted, well-meaning people slighting countless opportunities to assist and cheer, simply from this blind, molish habit of not seeing?

Such a presence as this made a new atmosphere in the Wayne house. When he was off for a day's hunt on the mountains — a kind of hunting wherein partridges started from his path and drummed off into deeper solitude unharmed, and great-eyed rabbits and nimble squirrels bounded across his line of vision, and got off with whole bones — the day, for some reason or other, seemed very long in the tall-chimneyed farm-house down in the valley; and when at night he came home, bringing no greater trophy of the day than some geological wonder, or a handful of forest flowers, there was a great rush, on little Carl's part, to meet him, and an unmistakable light of welcome in the eyes of Elenor.

These two people liked each other very much — very much more than either was aware.

It was natural enough that Elenor should like Seville. None but a rascal, of either sex, could have *dis*liked him. Thoroughly good, yet not too

good ; having little flashes of impatience, a little vanity, a little obstinacy, and a few other little blemishes, sufficient to keep him from taking to himself wings and flying away altogether !

Why he should like Elenor was another affair. To many she was not attractive. To many she did not "light up ;" but was only a dark, silent woman, whose reserve was probably coldness — may be sullenness ! To me she was strangely attractive, and at times beautiful, with a nature behind her shy, dusky eyes as impulsive and yearningly tender as a child's. In the last four years she had improved wonderfully. A being possessed of any force at all will find it harder work to stand still than to go on. And Elenor, in spite of the cold shadow upon her life, went on — on the one hand, bringing her mind into higher culture among Mr. Wayne's books and the many I was glad to loan her from our library ; and on the other hand, systematizing her household labors and making of them a sort of Fine Art. There was once a prisoner, you know, who found a great deal to interest him in watching the daily labors of a spider. Elenor's housework was, to her, a wonderfully interesting spider. In an atmosphere of love, she would have been that refiner and glorifier of farm-life, of whom Whittier sings in his "Life Among the Hills ;" and without that atmosphere,

like the palm that stood alone in the North, she still could not help keeping her own natural grace, though she might pine for the bright tropic joys which the inhospitable air denied her.

The largely increased dairy had made it absolutely necessary that there should be help employed in the house ; and through this aid and her systematic management, Elenor found an hour or two each day in which she did not read, or sew, or sleep, or perform any other pastime ; because when I had ferreted her out on several occasions, I saw there was not the slightest evidence of sewing, or reading, or sleeping ; but some hastily gathered scraps of manuscript, and an under-lip nervously bitten, as if the interruption had not been altogether pleasant.

I grew alarmed. I began to look about her immaculate floors for ink spots ; and to scan her middle finger anxiously to see if it was dyed a jet-black. I watched, tremblingly, to see Carl running at large "with one stocking off and one stocking on," after the manner of "Hi-diddle-dumpling." I casually inspected her bread to see if it was as sweet and light as ever. I am not naturally of a morbidly curious disposition, but I watched with much attention this blending of the beautiful housekeeper and the strong-minded woman.

One day she came out of her literary lair as she heard my familiar footsteps coming in search of her, and confronted me with a little poem.

"I suppose you have suspected me of this work, and I might as well confess. Now please read this and pronounce verdict."

I read it and said, "It is very pretty, I am sure;" and Elenor took it back, and smilingly tore it in pieces.

"When I can write something you can call good, then I will keep that poem. Your verdict is just, but I don't like very pretty rhymes."

So she went on cultivating this "strong-minded weakness," as she paradoxically termed her talent; and it seemed to me that I could see her high thoughts chiselling away at her clear, intelligent face, day by day, and bringing something of the calm of self-reliance into her troubled eyes.

And I could not see that her house was the less immaculate, Carl's buttons less firm, or that any retrograde movement occurred in the daily tasks which her hands found to do.

Such was the woman whom Seville liked, and with whom he sat under the trees one August afternoon and builded a castle in the air. Elenor had her sewing—nothing dainty or frivolous, but a long-seamed sheet from that heavy and durable fabric known as "Indian Head." Seville held an

unopened book, and a hammock — which he had imported — was occupied by Carl, who swung almost imperceptibly to and fro, deep in his afternoon nap. They had been talking of the farm — the farm as it was, and the farm as it might be.

“ I have a perfect ideal of my farm,” said Seville. “ It is a castle in the air that has become a crystallized dream, and is with me always.”

“ I would like to hear all about it,” said Elenor.

“ You shall. It is not as magnificent as you may imagine. Many people give themselves up to impossibly glorious images ; but I differ from most people, in the fact that my castle in the air is so plain and simple, so every way adapted to human nature's daily wants, that it might be turned into reality any day — might descend from the sky after the manner of the new Jerusalem, in fact — and make itself perfectly at home in the grove of elms yonder. Indeed, I have built it so often and so thoroughly that it hardly seems like a shadowy creation to me. Why, by partially closing my eyes, I can distinctly see its modest turrets rising' above the trees, and catch faint sounds of home music, the bark of my shepherd dog and the shouts of —” Seville stopped short, as if he had suddenly discovered himself thinking aloud.

“ Then, by closing your eyes altogether,” said Elenor, fairly embarked on the long seam, “ per-

haps you can be transported to its halls, and there partake of some ambrosial repast with your ideal family, and so spare me the task of making those cream-cakes for you by and by !”

“Do not interrupt me, madame ! I am now in a clairvoyant state. The man you see before you is a mere inanimate clod — his spirit is away upon his ideal farm,” leaning his head pensively on his hand and closing his eyes.

Elenor bent cautiously forward and touched his hand with the point of her needle. Seville, as if divining the movement, remained perfectly still, and Elenor, not sanguinary enough to bury the steel in his unshrinking hand, resumed her sewing, saying, as if to herself, “He is, indeed, quite gone !”

“I see,” began Seville, assuming a slow, dreamy tone, “I see a beautiful region of hill and valley — the hills crowned with forests, the hillsides specked with grazing flocks, and the valleys in green and gold, with pure little streams slipping murmurously along under fringing grasses and whispering willows. Peaceful white cottages look out from their overshadowing trees here and there, and chief among them is one stately roof, the roof of a spacious farm-house, with a broad verandah encircling it, and wide doors flung open like hospitable hands. The boundary between this pleas-

ant home and the dusty highway is a green terrace, on which grow eternally beautiful pines. The wide carriage-way winds in and out among the groves and shrubberies, and lakelets of the grounds—which are not all in full dress, but are *négligé* here and there in chaotic thickets and little wildernesses. Some wild, rollicking brook from the mountains comes singing and laughing under the trees and across green glades, sliding under a bridge or two, leaping a rock, and then bounding away to tell its little pranks to the smiling meadows.

“I see a barn—a great, generous barn! I smell the new hay in its vast mows; I see little cosy holes where are fresh eggs by the dozen. In the stables are two magnificent horses, who rub their velvet noses against my shoulder and look in my face with the soft, fiery eyes of thorough-breds. Through the wide-flung doors I see in a distant field a span of stout Morgan beauties drawing the loaded harvest-wain, as if the work were a mere pastime, their bright chestnut coats shifting the sunlight like satin.

“I see a vineyard, a southern slope covered densely with fruity vines; the Delaware, with its rich fragrance, and the drops of sunlight in its heart; the Hamburg, with its dark, massive clusters; the Catawba, full of empurpled honey.

"I see orchards, with the scarlet of cherries and the deeper blush of peaches upon the boughs; and, if it were a little later in the season, I should see the russet-gold of pears, the vivid gleaming of Spitzenbergs, and the pippins, yellow and bright as 'stars dipped in sunset.'

"I see pastures — real, green pastures, and still waters, and spreading shade trees, and — such cows! Durhams, with coats as red as a rose, almost, and coquettish, fawn-colored Devonshires, with the cream almost visible in them. Oh, my blessed cows — with their great serene eyes, their breath like clover, and their feet that never kick! If it were only milking-time I could tell you of the brimming pails, and the low lows of content, as one after another they are given a kindly slap and dismissed from the milking-yard. However, it is not milking-time, but the middle of the afternoon, and under the trees, or knee-deep in the brook, they stand, chewing and drowsing.

"Crossing to the hill yonder, where one tree is flaming in premature scarlet — like a radical leader of fashion dying to be weeks ahead of everybody — I come into my sugar orchard, and see a picturesque little hut, with a great chimney. This is the sugar-house. Inside are bright columns of tin buckets, and a huge pan for boiling the sap. It

is not of much interest now, but in March a nectar fit for the gods is manufactured here.

"I enter a woodland path, bordered with sweet briar and woodland berries, and I saunter on through the cool green shade. I am enjoying a delightful walk, the world of God comes so near the world of man in the rich silence of this dark, sweet forest!

"I am in the garden — my kitchen garden, a place of sunny luxuriance, where every vegetable thrives and flourishes as if it were a candidate for an agricultural world's-fair. Mammoth squashes loom upon the eye; melons, half-grown, lie among the vines like big sea-turtles; cabbages there are, meet to thrill the heart of Germany; soldierly ranks of marrowfats, and Laxton's Supreme stand guard over beds of crisp lettuce; and, although every known vegetable is here found growing to an unprecedented size, there is still room for stray patches of pinks and violets, or mounds of sweet peas, that rise amid the prose of beets and carrots like fair little poems.

"As I move on, the vegetable world ceases, and I come upon vast beds of strawberries — now, unhappily, gone by — and long rows of raspberries, white, red, and black. The vines are loaded with their beautiful fruit. I can think how, at a touch from light fingers, they would drop,

and, having been touched by those light fingers, how very nice they would be for tea!

"And now picturesque portions of my castle begin to be manifest. I see the dairy-house, built of stone, standing over the brook which runs swiftly beneath, as if trying to bear it away on its light waves; the roof is shaded by a graceful willow; the air within is pure and cool, and the butter made here tastes of dew-drops and clover and all the sweets of the meadows.

"Close by is the ice-house. Ice in August is civilization.

"My path suddenly winds around a grove of lilacs; a world of flowers and shrubs opens upon my eyes, and here I am before my house. I can't afford a wonderful house, but it is very pleasant. I see high walls, cheerfully yet softly tinted, with a rare landscape or a lovely face smiling down here and there; fire-places, for winter evenings; books, easy-chairs, open doors — showing vistas of home-like rooms, — and a broad, sloping staircase leading up to breezy, sunlit chambers.

"I see one room particularly, a room looking down upon a parterre of verbenas, and looking out to the hills, beyond which faintly shine the spires and towers of a great city. The carpet is like woodland moss; curtains that might have come from Cloudland drape the windows; bright

pictures of holy and beautiful things hang upon the walls ; a tender-toned piano stands open in an arched recess ; a pendent basket of roses swings with the light breeze in the broad, open window ; an open book and a trifling bit of sewing lie on the table ; near at hand is a rocking-chair — wide, deep, sleepily-soft — in which somebody, when very tired, can find sweet rest ; and standing by the window — watching for somebody, it seems to me — is a woman.

“ I can't tell how she is dressed, exactly ; but some simple fabric floats about her with an airy grace, and at her white throat and white wrists are knots of violet ribbon. This room in which she is standing is hers — though, for that matter, the whole house is hers ; her presence pervades it ; she goes flitting from duty to duty, from work to play and from play to work, like a singing-bird ; in her every touch there is peace and order ; she is everywhere the same radiant spirit, whether she is calling some tender ballad from the piano, staining her fingers with berries, or making my cream-cakes in the kitchen. She is the blessed Angel of the Farm ! — my adored wife ! ”

Elenor, who had listened with idle hands and kindling eyes that saw every portion of this fair picture, suddenly bent over her work and began to sew rapidly, so that when Seville — who

had spoken all the while in the same dreamy voice—opened his eyes, lifted his head, and announced himself in his normal condition, the chief business of existence, with his listener, appeared to be the sewing of long seams at lightning-like speed. Her own dress was of “simple fabric,” a lawn dotted with microscopic cherries; and at her throat was a knot of violet ribbon. But he meant nothing! How idiotic she would appear, she thought, if she attached any meaning to his light words! After a few more rapid stitches, she paused to rethread her needle, and asked, very carelessly:

“Have you any remembrance of what you have been saying?”

“I think I have. Indeed, some of the visions are before me still, and brighter than ever—so near and yet so far!” with a laughing tone in his voice that did not quite cover his earnest words.

“How long has this airy presence, with a faculty for tender ballads and violet ribbons, been presiding in your castle?” regarding him very candidly.

“Oh, these many years there has been a presence there, but until recently it has been a very filmy presence. Six weeks since I could not for my life have told whether this Presence had black or blue eyes, or whether its ribbons were violet

old sterling country. England is tame, rather. What we want is some region which Nature has not smothered with kindness ; a region where we can set bleak hills rejoicing with vines and flocks, and the vales blossoming like the rose."

"I wonder if the Catawbas would do well in Scotland?" with a pretended anxiety in her face.

"I think they may take their chances on a Cheviot hill-side. Or we can build an extensive greenhouse. We will have the greenhouse, at all events," he added.

"But is this agricultural business to win you from your better work?" This time there was real gravity in her tones, and her eyes were lifted to his with a shadow of rebuke in them.

"Every work is good work, child, if the hands behind it are good! You mean my preaching. Well, in that great city whose spires you were watching, just now, between the hills, I shall find Sunday work to do ; work in which I shall try to lead people to see that a joyous heart is the true religion, and everyday deeds of goodness the best prayer."

The spires which she had been watching ! What pleasant wild nonsense this day-dream was, she thought, glancing at Seville pacing radiantly to and fro in the mottled sunlight.

"Do you like me?" he asked at length, gravely.

"Oh! very much," answered Elenor with equal gravity.

"Then what we have to do is to fly—fly at once!" coming to a halt and putting on a very conclusive air.

The idea of "flying"—and especially that these two beings should fly—and fly from such a sober matter-of-fact place as an ancient farmhouse where the wheat was being harvested, and cream-cakes were to be made for supper—seemed so very grotesque, that both burst into hearty peals of laughter, in the midst of which Carl dug his fists into his eyes, flung one bare leg over the edge of the hammock, and eventually opened his big dream-haunted eyes as additional ridicule at the idea of flying.

Elenor leaned toward the round dimpled leg and kissed it with a sudden passionate warmth. Then she rolled her work together and rose to go to the house, saying as she helped Carl from his nest:

"I have been pleasantly entertained; and now I think it is time for me to go in and make the cream-cakes," a quiet sadness in her voice.

"And I will go on dreaming," said Seville in a voice sadder than her own.

Their eyes met, and each knew, then, how very

much the other was "liked;" and each started back from the discovery with averted face.

"I did not think it was so late!" said Elenor hurriedly, with trembling lips, glancing at the western sky, and walking so rapidly toward the house that Carl's roseate feet were obliged to break into a twinkling trot in order to keep pace with her own.

"It is hardly five o'clock, I think," called out Seville, better skilled in self-control. Then he laid down in the hammock, just vacated by Carl, covered his face with his book, and dreamed, indeed,—a dream in which there was prayer and struggle and much selfish weakness.

That night, as Mr. Wayne was reading in his room, Elenor entered—slightly pale, as she always was when moved by some strong feeling—and closing the door, came slowly to his side and looked wistfully down upon him. Mr. Wayne, was aware that this was an unusual thing for Elenor to do. She seldom failed in being civil to him, but the old clinging fondness, that had once been in her heart and on her lips for him, had long ago disappeared. It was unusual that she should seek him in this way; but it was one of Mr. Wayne's principles never to be surprised; so he read out his paragraph carefully before looking up.

"Well," said he.

Elenor sank down at his side, still looking wistfully in his face ; and Mr. Wayne regarded her as if he would like to know what new phase of flummery was manifesting itself.

" Did you ever love me ? " she asked.

" Oh ! " said Mr. Wayne, much relieved that it was not an affair of money. " You are in a romantic frame of mind, are you ? " meaning to laugh good-naturedly ; but it was still that laugh which had difficulty in getting out of his throat.

" I am in earnest," never heeding the laugh.
" Did you ever love me ? "

" So far as you were lovable ! A nature to be loved must be lovable," uttering a truism that had come with better grace from other lips than his, and eying her as if to say, " If you talk love to me I will try to make you understand my high, abstract views of the subject."

" Must be lovable ! " Elenor repeated. " I was lovable once, wasn't I ? "

" I once thought I saw congenial traits in you," regarding her as a naturalist might regard an impaled insect.

" What were those traits ? " she asked.

" I imagined I saw unselfishness, simplicity, and, above all, I thought I saw a sympathetic and gentle disposition."

" And you think these traits congenial to .

you!" laughing rather hysterically at the absurdity.

"I wish to finish this article," said Mr. Wayne, turning to his newspaper.

"Austin, *don't* put me off in this way! *Please* talk to me. Tell me what I shall do to be lovable! It was the dream of my heart to be loved—by you. It is so terrible—regarding each other in this way, when there are all the long, long years to come! Oh, if you would only be a little different—if you would only be kinder—a *little* kinder to me—then I would try so hard to be what you once thought me to be. And we might be happy, after all. Oh tell me that you love me, my husband! Tell me that you love me a little still!" clinging to his knees and putting her face, wild in its entreaty, between him and his newspaper.

Another chance for the man to have redeemed himself! Had he but merely placed his hand on her head and said, "Elenor, we are widely unsuited to each other; but I will endeavor to be less dissatisfied with you hereafter," even this cool reply might have been the turning point that had saved this poor lost life. But these words were not spoken.

Mr. Wayne shrugged his shoulders, smoothed his newspaper and drew the lamp nearer. "It is

useless to talk. Natures can't be changed. You are you, and I am I." With these calm, terse, conclusive sentences, he resumed his reading.

A little snatch of song, accompanied by soft guitar notes, came drifting in through the open window — one of the most beautiful love-songs that the world of music holds ; for its love is unselfish and affectionate, rather than passionate ; a love that in possession is still tender and true —

"Ah wert thou in the cauld blast
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry gale,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee !
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blow — around thee blow —
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'."

"That man's excessive romance is infectious, I fancy !" said Mr. Wayne with tranquil contempt, turning to look at Elenor.

But Elenor had left the room.



or scarlet; but now, by shutting my eyes very closely and listening intently, I can almost hear it breathe — it is such a tangible presence.”

“How fortunate you are!” exclaimed Elenor; “possessed of a beautiful estate that never needs any repairs, and a wife whose airy fabrics and violet ribbons cost nothing at all!”

“You are mistaken! I am constantly repairing and making additions to this estate, and my outlays for violet ribbons are immense.”

“But I am certain there is never any failure in the crops; and the — the temper of this Presence is always sweet, is it not?”

“The crops sometimes fail, but the misfortune is like the shadow of a cloud that fleetly scales the mountain side, leaving everything as bright as ever. But the temper — ah, the temper of this beloved Presence is bad, very bad, indeed! I am obliged to keep her surrounded with everything that is cheerful and lovely, and to conduct myself like a perfect saint, or else, how she flies at me!” Drawing a deep sigh, as if the martyrdom were really upon him, while Elenor laughed as lightly as if every word had not fallen like a plummet into the deeps of her heart.

“On the whole, is not my castle a very fair, reasonable, practicable sort of castle?” he asked.

"I think it is," said Elenor, earnestly; "and very beautiful, too!"

"I am glad you like it—I thought you would. I mean to go to work and build it—really build it!" rising and pacing to and fro over the smoothly-shaven grass, his face lighted up, not alone by the sunlight that fell in dancing flakes of gold through the elm boughs.

"I'm afraid you can't find the desired combination of woodland, southern slopes, and dancing brooks in this vicinity, for love or money!" said Elenor, assuming a thoughtful air.

"That is bad! But, then, I've not quite decided on the locality. Where had I best build it?" looking at Elenor with earnest eyes. "I have thought of California. Would you like California?"

Elenor was not to be surprised from her placid rôle of adviser. "Y—es. California is a royal region, I am told; but California will be a nicer place a hundred years to come. For myself, I like the quiet and the restful simplicity of old places."

"England?" questioned Seville.

"England would doubtless be very lovely, but you might not find very satisfactory mountains there. I think I prefer Scotland."

"Very well; it is Scotland, then! It is a brave

church; and Mr. Wayne had this one weakness — a desire to be eminently respectable. Our few people who ignore church-going are of that class whose broken windows are mended with old hats and whose cows subsist on the road, — altogether a shiftless, gypsy-species of citizens, generally found in the best-regulated communities. Mr. Wayne had no desire to place himself on a level with this class.

In fine weather he walked. But if the skies or the roads were a little forbidding, he would harness his best horse and drive to church with a certain austere pride of the animal's paces.

It was a hot, sultry Sunday morning. Dark clouds slowly drifted above the horizon, and the blue-eyed pimpernel was prophetically closed. As the time for service drew near, Mr. Wayne had his favorite brought out, and put to the light double-seated buggy. Elenor, on whom the choir depended for contralto, and Carl, to whom sermons were a patiently endured bore, occupied the back seat, and Mr. Wayne, with proudly gathered reins, sat in front. Seville, who always walked, unless the weather was too forbidding, started for church half an hour before, going across the fields after his own favorite fashion.

The sermon — some statistical question of the Old Testament, treated throughout with persistence

tameness — was unusually lengthy, and the flies out in the long carriage shed unusually virulent; so that Prince, the beloved Wayne horse, stood, along with his numerous fellow-victims, for two full hours, stamping dumb, heavy, horse-anathemas on all hot summer Sundays in general, and this Sunday in particular, and nothing but the invincible strength of his halter restraining him from losing all patience and smashing everything he could lay his heels at.

This mood was on him still when he had restively suffered Mr. Wayne to help his family into the buggy; but he stood champing his bit in an admirably self-controlled manner, and contented himself with rolling his eyes, full of inner fire, upon the driver, who was so infuriatingly slow in all his movements.

“You had better ride, sir!” said Mr. Wayne to Seville. The clouds of the morning now hung threateningly overhead, and deep thunder echoes sounded every moment louder along the sluggish air. Seville glanced at the restless horse, at the clouds, at Elenor, and then sprang to the seat beside Mr. Wayne. Prince feeling himself at liberty to go, went. He felt like jumping out of his harness, like rolling in meadow grass, like plunging headlong into summer streams and making rollicking atonement for his two hours of torment. The

steady pull at his mouth irritated him exceedingly. He was ready to risk any amount of flogging for the pleasure of one good mad runaway — such as he remembered to have enjoyed in the days of his colthood. But our New England irregularity of the earth's surface doesn't admit of race-courses everywhere ; and steep and sideling places in the road, and Mr. Wayne's careful control of the lines, sadly interfered with the intentions of the handsome horse.

The sky rapidly darkened, and the flashes of lightning grew more and more vivid. There were presages in the air not of dancing summer showers, but of tempest and disaster. Just in sight of home, the road, that all along followed the sinuous banks of the stream, climbed an abrupt height, so that on one side rose the hill, and on the other lay the stream, fifteen feet below, and deepened at this point into one of its many little lakes. A rude fence built of brambles and rails, put up with the apparent aim of merely breaking a fall, not arresting it, did not quite reach the level of the road, thus giving one the comfortable choice of being impaled on a stake, or being drowned in the depths below, should a fall occur.

Prince had just wilfully dashed up the acclivity when there came such a flash of light in his eyes and such a crash in his ears, his taxed nerves gave

way at once ; and he swerved and reared, and was ready to hurl himself anywhere. There were two seconds in which to think and to act. In that time Mr. Wayne leaped out, uttering wild "whoas," Seville snatched the reins, Elenor tossed Carl to the side of safety among the mullen stalks of the hill-side, with one swift glance seeing that at any-rate she had not killed him, and then horse, carriage, Seville, and Elenor went down the bank, crashing over the fence, and through the light willows into the deep dark waters of the pond.

Mr. Wayne looking down beheld a struggling mass, in which after a brief interval he distinguished the form of Seville, half risen from the water, and caught a glimpse of his floundering horse.

"*Save him!* SAVE MY HORSE!" he shouted.

The shout, half drowned as it was in a fresh crash of thunder, reached the ear of Seville, and even in the midst of the wild tumult and danger, the ludicrous meanness of the man made him smile, and in the next moment swear — not profanely — a big, deep oath that the life, held less dear than that of a vicious horse, should to *him* be priceless! — if he could save her!

He plunged down into the troubled waters, a dreadful fear in his heart that he sought for that which was no longer a life. A convulsed hand caught his own. She was drowning there, with her

dress entangled in the carriage. With all the strength of soul and body he caught her in his arm and wrenched her away. The two came up to the surface, blinding light and sharply driven rain in their faces — and the blessed air !

Mr. Wayne wildly swung himself down the bank to the rescue of Prince, sustaining himself by grasping the willows, and managing to reach the horse's head so as to forcibly keep his nose above water, all the time shouting for assistance.

Seville made his way slowly down the stream to the more accessible bank, sometimes losing his footing, sometimes walking with the water at his mouth, but holding Elenor securely, and keeping her death-white face above the surface. He had walked past this pond daily for many weeks, but as he laboriously floundered to the shore, he thought he had never fully estimated or appreciated its depth and extent, and its wonderful resources for drowning. As he reached the bank, and drew Elenor up beside him, "he breathed deep, and he breathed long," and thanked God.

The low-hanging branches of a great elm shielded them from the pouring rain. He wrung the water from her hair, breathed his own half-spent breath into her mouth, and strove with a kind of fierce tenderness to recall her to consciousness. Something was crimsoning the dark braids that

had fallen down her shoulders; a spot of scarlet showed through the white ribbons of the little mashed bonnet. Seville removed it and shudderingly sought the wound. How deep and how terrible it might be, he knew not; he only saw the dripping of precious blood and the deathliness of a dear face.

“Oh my poor darling!” he murmured, bending his lips to her ear. “If there is yet a throb of life in your heart, listen to me!—hear me tell you, before you go, how I love you with my whole soul! Darling, darling! open your dear eyes! It is I who am with you!”

One instant he hesitated, and then his warm, impetuous mouth was pressed to hers — “for the first time — and the last, my own love!”

A gasping breath rose to the cold lips, and the dark eyes opened slowly, affrightedly, and looked up into his.

“God save your sweet life, or take mine also!” he cried with passionate earnestness.

A sudden vivid flush swept over her face, and an exclamation of pain and of terror trembled upon her lips. Did they still fill the kiss that had clung there so tenderly, so despairingly!

“Don’t speak — again!” she said, shrinking away from him.

“I love you so, my poor—”

"I will go home," she said, lifting her head from his supporting arm, and trying to sit upright.

"Darling, you are hurt! Remain here! The rain —"

"I will go!" wrenching her hand from his with a frantic movement, and rising to her feet. One instant she stood there, brave, resolute; then, with a paling cheek and lips that shut back a cry of pain, she sat down.

"A sprained ankle, I think," smiling wanly.

"Then I can carry you in my arms," said Seville in tones that were almost joyous. "But first let me bind up your head. It is not a serious hurt — since you can act with this cruel independence."

Detaching the veil from her bonnet, he bound it over the crimson spot in her hair with swift, gentle fingers. "Now put your arms about my neck, and be as heavy as you please!" He lifted her in his arms as he spoke. She felt his stout heart throbbing against her side as she leaned upon his shoulder, faint with pain. Up the ascent he toiled, pausing just once beneath screening willows to look into her eyes.

"Would to Heaven I might hold you in this way forever!" he exclaimed.

"Hush! Never speak to me—in this way—again!" she moaned. Then with a sudden light coming into her eyes, she added, "But hereafter

my life will be sweet ~~to me~~ — because *you* have saved it !”

He kissed the pale lips trembling with their double pain. “God bless you, my own love ! life *shall* be sweet to you — sometime !”

The Doctor and I and some other neighbors, shielded by provident umbrellas, had by this time reached the place of accident. Mr. Wayne was still ineffectually trying to extricate his horse. “Will somebody jump in and cut away the harness ? Ten dollars to any one who will cut the harness !” he shouted. But as we were all clustering about Elenor, the appeal seemed to be unheeded.

“She is quite badly hurt ; a sprained ankle and other bruises. She must sit down and be shielded by your umbrella, Doctor. Some wagon must be coming this way soon. Go bring one !” he said imperiously to a gaping youth, who straightway vanished as if expelled from a mortar. “Here, Trojan,” addressing himself to little Carl, who was screaming lustily among his mullen stalks, “come to your mamma, under the umbrella ! Nobody killed, Mrs. Graham, unless it’s that accursed horse !” And before any one could do aught but take in his rapid words, he had disappeared down the bank again.

"Is my wife — hurt?" asked Mr. Wayne as Seville appeared beside him.

"Pray, don't interest yourself in her fate until this animal is helped out!" said Seville curtly, his temper getting the better of him. Swimming to the horse's head he found a foothold on the sunken thills, drew his pocket-knife, and cut the harness away on either side. Prince, rallying, jerked his nose free of his master's sustaining hand, swam feebly to the first convenient landing-place, and clambered ashore, limping and bleeding.

The rain was still falling heavily when a wagon made its appearance, and Elenor, and Carl, and the Doctor's wife were helped into it. The Doctor and Seville walked behind; the latter pale and proud, as a hero should be, with a look of half-veiled scorn in his eyes, as they fell upon Mr. Wayne, that would have pierced that man through had it been a sword instead of a look.

After Elenor's hurts had been properly dressed, and I had assisted her into dry clothes, some one said that Seville would like to see the Doctor in his room. My St. John says he sat in a chair, slightly pale, to be sure, but serene as a god, and asked him to remove a goodly portion of rail fence which he had found imbedded in his shoulder, and to take a few stitches in a gaping cut in his leg, which had partially filled his boot with blood.

His knife had slipped when cutting the harness, he said, but he had no idea it was more than a scratch.

Those were rare days that followed. Rare days in which the two sat in the sweet, vine-shaded quiet of the great square parlor, with their feet upon cushions, mutually lame ! her busy fingers sewing, and his musical voice reading. Rare days, that were a sort of Honeymoon to these two beings, who never kissed or clasped hands or uttered any words of endearment, but who sat apart, like two stars, and shone upon each other across the abyss that seemed so narrow and was yet so very wide. The world was not the world of a month ago. It was created anew. The birds sang sonnets ; the sunbeams fell in lines of poesy ; the common air was full of a sweet, intangible, unfathomable romance ; and the hearts that felt its spell were too pure to detect the misery and the poison that lurked therein.

August was lost in September, and the maples, here and there, began to put on their early autumn tints, when Seville declared his hours of idleness over, and made preparations to return to the city.

"I hope we shall see you here again next summer," said Mr. Wayne, disposed to regard him — since the rescue of Prince — rather favorably, in

spite of the flummery abounding in his composition.


And Seville responded "Thank you," and shook hands with impartial cordiality ; only I hope everybody did not feel their hand ache for a whole hour as Elenor did. \





CHAPTER XV.

A CRISIS.

ITTLE CARL had a terrible struggle with his E's and F's.

Elenor thought it because he was too young to manage the alphabet—being not yet four.

Mr. Wayne thought he was merely obstinate—wilfully stupid. *He* knew his letters—why, he could not remember when he did not know them, they came to his clear and willing brain so readily! Plainly the boy was obstinate, and was determined to go on making an F out of an E and an E out of an F as long as he lived, unless properly corrected.

Six months had passed since Seville's return to New York. Six months of cheerful labor, society, books, art, and all the rich fulness of city-life, to him. Six months of unimportant, fruitless work, eventless days, and the quiet sombreness of her winter farm-life, to her. One life, sunny and brimming, without crosses and without voids.

The other — well, may Heaven help such lives! — lives that never come before the world as martyrs, or even as extraordinary sufferers — being only lives of quiet, unappealing desolation!

I am a very strong-minded, wilful, self-poised, independent sort of a woman. If the Doctor is an oak and I am a vine — as poets are fond of declaring a husband and wife to be — I cling to him with qualified abandon, and grow sturdily and strongly around him; so that — to pursue the poetical figure — if the Oak should become a little tired of the drag upon him, I, the Vine, am prepared to stand alone at a moment's notice. I believe the Doctor knows this; and that accounts for the fact that he is such a joyous, cheerful sort of an oak — trying to make the vine believe that her weight is an ecstasy, rather than otherwise, and that he supports her with the greatest pleasure in the world.

What was I saying?

I am a strong-minded woman, I repeat. And I rejoice to hear voices going up from the best journals in the land, chiming in this one chorus of prophecy: Women are coming to the surface! Women are going to work for themselves! We are going to have women-doctors, women-preachers, women-merchants in abundance! Every girl is to be educated and trained to a pro-

fession as well as a boy! And *then* we shall have no more millions of human dolls by our firesides, waiting mute and lifeless, like the Sleeping Beauty in the Enchanted Castle, for the "rich husband" who is—like the knight's kiss—their only salvation.

This prophecy may come true, or it may not. In either case it can never lift woman quite above the need of being loved. And so marriage will go on, and better marriage, and more perfect marriage, I trust; but it will be found that the woman is dependent as ever upon the man for her real happiness.

"A good husband makes the good wife," is a sentence that every man should have written on his heart in letters of gold. A woman's soul is not complete in itself, and the man she weds has power to build it up into beautiful completeness, or leave it a ruin. A woman's nature is yielding and flexible; and the man she weds can make of that nature an angel or a devil. It is only when she puts her heart aside, and makes herself lovelessly strong and sorrowfully self-poised, that she can truly say her soul is her own.

Had Austin Wayne been the good husband, there had been no better wife in Baywood than Elenor. But with Wayne as he was, Elenor was unavoidably bad. All the ugly spirits of defiance

and scorn and hatred grew in her nature to strong *athletes*, standing with clinched hands ready to do battle with him. A milder, weaker, more patient woman would have given up her own will entirely, and become a mere frightened echo to him. A tender-hearted, less sanguine woman would have died outright on the earliest possible occasion, and people would have said, "She was a lovely woman!" But Elenor was not weak, nor very patient. It frightened her at times to think how very wicked she was capable of being. And yet—in those old bright days, when *he* was by her side—she remembered how good she was!—what noble thoughts and sweet aspirations swarmed in her soul!—what pure, bright gladness rang in her heart!—and how she could have looked angels in the face with eyes as clear and joyous as their own.

It showed how dependent was this one woman, at least, upon the man to whom she gave her hand.

To return to Carl's education.

It was one of those wild, blustering days in early March, when positively nothing could be accomplished out-of-doors. One of the days especially dreaded by Elenor, for Mr. Wayne—not being socially inclined, like the farm-hands who took their pipes and their politics to the

hospitable warmth of the grocery-store — clung like a lichen to the fireside, suppressing every outburst of playfulness in Carl, and keeping up a low, running fire of grumbles against Elenor's entire housekeeping administration.

Elenor and Carl would frequently betake themselves to the fireless quiet of the upper rooms, glad to be cold and uncomfortable, if by going away from that fireside they could escape the surly presence that sat by it. But it was so excessively cold and bleak on this day, the bright flame and genial warmth of the fire almost counteracted the discomfort which the husband and father managed to scatter about him ; and so they stood their ground.

"It is time the boy knew every one of his letters!" said Mr. Wayne, after having attacked a score of subjects for complaint.

"He knows nearly all of them," said Elenor, hopefully.

"Get your book, Thomas, and I'll see for myself."

Thomas gravely put down the knife and stick with which he was beguiling away the weary moments, and got his book, which had a great many suggestive dogs' ears in the vicinity of the alphabet.

"Now, remember, dear, F has no foot at all,

and E *has*," said his mother, cheeringly, as he took the book to his father.

"Nonsense with your feet! Let him learn them as I learned them. Now, then, begin at the top."

"A, B, C, D, — F."

"It is not F, you stupid! It's E. Remember. Begin again!"

"A, B, C, D," —

"Well, what next?"

"It is the letter with the foot," said Carl.

"That is a brilliant idea!" regarding him scornfully; "what did I tell you it was?"

"F," said Carl, beginning to show signs of fear.

"E! E! E! that's what I told you! Are you going to remember?" taking his ear between his thumb and finger.

"Yes, yes, papa!"

"He can't be frightened into remembering it — you ought to know that!" said Elenor, every nerve beginning to quiver.

"I will see about that. I am teaching him this time. It is nothing but his stupid obstinacy."

"He is neither stupid nor obstinate," said Elenor, wishing she could remain cool and contemptuous like this man before her, instead of feeling her heart beat in such heavy, hot pulsations, and such fire running along her veins.

"Whatever he is or isn't, I will teach him the difference between E and F before I'm done with him, you'll see!"

Carl looked up at his mother with paling cheeks and imploring eyes. He remembered that something of this kind had happened once before.

"If you undertake to whip him into learning the difference, you are a greater idiot than I ever thought you to be!" said Elenor, vehemently.

"In using such language, you simply beat yourself! It doesn't touch *me*!" with a lofty look. "Now, Thomas, begin again."

Carl, now thoroughly confused, began; but at that fatal E his tongue refused to move. If he was to be flung into the fire for forgetting, he had forgotten, nevertheless. Oh, why couldn't some good, kind fairy, ever hovering around good children, whisper in his ear that the dreadful letter with a foot was E? But no fairy whispered; and Carl, growing desperate, said F.

"Thomas, look up here!"

The child looked up as he might have looked up into the face of a dragon.

"I tell you again that the letter is E. If you don't remember it this time, I will go and get a stick and whip you until you do remember it. Do you hear, sir?"

An odd little fellow was Carl. Not a tear came

into his eyes or a quiver to his lip ; but he turned paler than ever, and stood looking down at the terrible alphabet as white and motionless as a little statue.

“ Now go on ! ”

“ A, B, C, D, ” —

“ Go on ! ” in that tone that is so frightful from a father.

“ I *tant* go on ! I *tant* know what it is ! ”

“ What is that letter, sir ? ” in the same unrelenting tone.

There was a time in my early education when, if I had been burnt at the stake for it, I could not distinguish V from W. There is a marked difference between the two letters, but I had them hopelessly entangled. It was a misunderstanding, a kink in the machinery of my brain which time alone corrected. Such was Carl's attitude to his E's and F's.

“ What is that letter, sir ? ” repeated his tutor, his voice gathering new terrors.

“ I dess it's F, ” faltered the boy.

“ What you need is a downright flogging, and you shall have it ! ” and Mr. Wayne got up and went out, opening his knife as he went, steering straight for the clump of willows in the garden.

He had never whipped Carl with a stick. Snaps and slaps had answered heretofore. It was

high time to introduce switches. At the age of eight or ten the horsewhip could come in play. After that—pitchforks, if necessary! At any rate, no obstinacy like this should grow up in his house.

Carl watched his father as he cut a long, lithe stick and turned to re-enter the house—the wild storm tossing his hair, and making him look nearer a demon, if possible, than he was.

Elenor watched him also, with her teeth set together like a vice, and her eyes like slumberous coals.

A year before the newspapers throughout the country had discussed the crime of a certain minister wearing the livery of Heaven, who had deliberately whipped his little son to death. He was touched very lightly by the law for it,—if he was touched at all! Elenor recalled this incident. Since there was no other way, then, to shield a child from such parental demons, she herself would be a shield.

Mr. Wayne's step was heard in the hall.

"*Mamma!*" It was the appealing cry she had heard once before, and had been powerless to answer it. Now, she would stand by him.

"He won't touch you, dear!" and her voice was so hoarse and strange it seemed to come from other lips than her own.

"He won't, will he?" said Mr. Wayne.

"No!" and she stood between him and the shrinking child.

What would she do? throttle him, or strike him — after the manner of lightning — or slay him with some deadly concealed weapon? She looked capable of doing all three, Mr. Wayne thought, and he shrank back a half-step, thinking of his personal safety.

Then his malignant spirit rose even above his cowardice. He lifted the heavy switch and struck her across the face. Carl shrieked as if the blow had fallen upon himself. A livid line, deepening instantly to scarlet, with drops of blood slowly oozing through, showed with what will it had been given.

"I thank you for this," said Elenor, calmly; "but you will never lay your hands on Carl, in this way, while I live!"

Mr. Wayne's eyes fell, in spite of himself, before that calm, awful face, with its line of blood.

"There will be times when I can do so without having to deal with a she-devil first!" he said, doggedly.

"You will wait for that time, Austin Wayne!"

And then Elenor lifted the affrighted Carl in her arms and went out of the room.

At night, when the farm-hands came from their

pipes and their gossip, and Mr. Wayne closed the book with which he had been trying to soothe his outraged spirit, and they all gravitated toward the kitchen for the unfailing six-o'clock supper, the places of the mother and child were vacant.

Nor were they ever to be filled again.





CHAPTER XVI.

A DISAPPEARANCE.

MR. WAYNE could not quite shut out from his consciousness those two vacant places ; but he refrained from any audible comment on them. Without doubt the woman had extravagantly made a fire upstairs, and was staying by it, coddling her satanic temper and spoiling the boy with her silly fondness.

But then — the mark he had put upon her face might have occasioned some awkward comment, had she been visible ; so it was well she had remained out of sight.

The girl was aware that Mrs. Wayne and Carl, well wrapped and muffled from the storm, had left the house three hours before — “going to Mrs. Graham’s to spend the afternoon,” Mrs. Wayne had said ; and thinking the movement neither a secret nor extraordinary one, she occupied her mistress’ place at table, and said nothing of her absence.

Darkness settled down upon the world, the storm still unabated.

"I think Mrs. Wayne will stay all night, likely," said the girl, as the clock struck nine; and in punctual observation of the hour, she took a candle from the mantle-shelf and lighted it for retiring.

"Stay where?" asked Mr. Wayne, in surprise. Then not wishing to appear ignorant of her whereabouts, he added—"Ah, was it Mrs. Griffin or the Grahams she went to visit?" feeling that, under the circumstances, she would not be apt to go elsewhere.

"She went to Mrs. Graham's. Perhaps she expected you to call for her with the sleigh," suggested the girl.

"I hardly think she did," responded Mr. Wayne, dryly.

Really, this was worse than having the fire and the sullen pout in her room! Was it possible she could be weak enough to take her domestic troubles to her neighbors? He had flattered himself that she was possessed—with all her faults—of at least one grain of common-sense.

He went to bed in a not very comfortable frame of mind.

Morning came—golden, serene, sparkling; the dark clouds wheeling down the horizon like gray wolves from a night of banquet. Noon came also, and Mr. Wayne having business in the next town,

casually drove past the Doctor's, casually called, and casually remarked to the Doctor's wife—who met him at the door—that as the walking was bad, he had driven round that way that Elenor might ride home.

“Elenor! she is not here!” said I, greatly surprised.

“Ah! I must have missed her on the way!” blandly. “How long since she started?”

“Why, last night!” said I, more surprised than ever. “You don't tell me she hasn't reached home?” and the anxiety in my face would have done credit to a Kean.

“It is likely she stopped at Mrs. Griffin's, then, as that would be on her way home; and the night was—the night was rather unpleasant.”

“Decidedly unpleasant! I tried to persuade her to remain here. I was sure she would take cold in her face,” enjoying the slight wince my words occasioned. “I was surprised that she should go out at all with such a—violent toothache!”

“Ah!” said Mr. Wayne, with an air of relief. “Good-day!”

“Good-day, Mr. Wayne!”

And then the Doctor's wife closed the door, and performed several wild antics in the solitude of the hall.

Yes, in the main I pass for a sprightly, good-

natured, perfectly transparent woman—handy at weddings and picnics and church-fairs; “plain spoken,” but of rather sunny disposition; and as a whole, a very desirable member of society—not quite dull enough to be a bore, and not quite brilliant enough to excite a wish in my fellow-women to scratch my eyes out!—a safe, comfortable, middle-ground sort of a citizen, cheerfully making the most of the place assigned me in the scale of creation.

Such am I currently considered. That I am, beneath this sunny superficiality, a daring plottist, is a fact not generally known.

But I will go back a few hours.

I was sitting by my cheerful afternoon fire. The sleet was beating fiercely against the windows, and then melting and running down the panes in tears of regret at its own folly in trying to bring about another winter. “Lute,” the canary, deluded by the bright fire, and the perfume of the roses and heliotropes from the open door of the conservatory, into the belief that it was pleasant weather, was trilling a song of almost frantic joyousness; and from the far-off kitchen—to add to the general sense of comfort—came faint perspective whiffs of a roasting turkey.

Speaking of this whiff from the kitchen, it has

much to do with one's impression of a house,—what it smells of! Well and good if it smells of nothing; but I think, until we enter houses not made with hands, our houses will have their odors. I have visited very well-to-do houses wherein lurked mongrel, tenacious scents of last week's pancakes, and depressing gloomy odors of bygone steaks. I think the effect cannot be agreeable to persons of razor-like perceptions, like you and I, my reader!

To one who has ever stopped to think of it, this one sense—smell—is a very powerful sense. What marvellous influence it possesses over the memory, for instance! What touch of art, or magic of that great artist, the sun, brings up one's childhood-home in the country, like the fragrance of new-mown hay? What so keenly recalls glad days by the seaside, like the breath of the ocean blowing over the dusty land and greeting the brow of the traveller hastening to it with its old faithful, eternal saltiness and savor? What so floods the heart with vivid remembrances like the favorite perfume of some loved one who, in this life, walks beside us no more? I know of one who, to this day, grows white at the breath of English violets; and another who cannot endure the scent of cigars, because a certain brave boy,

loved and lost, was always, so to speak, flavored with them !

It is a sense that unlocks the most sacred chambers of the memory, and leads forth the old love and the old pain in all its keenness and sweetness. I am not sure but it has much control over one's moods, also. Music charms the savage ; and why should not the fragrance of hyacinth and rose charm the savage likewise ? I think it does. Sometimes when I am very much vexed, — and that housekeeper who is never vexed should be wafted into the better land, being too perfect for this life — a bit of geranium breath from my conservatory sweeps over my troubled spirit like some voiceless " Peace, be still," and I am still.

Now, although I would not suggest that a house be deluged with Lubin's essences, I do suggest that a house should try to be sweet,— wholesomely and inexpensively sweet. My plants cost nothing but a little care ; and my St. John's arrangements for sunlight and ventilation cost still less ; and yet I am pleased and gratified to see my friends' faces unknot a little of their care as they enter, while they say, " How sweet and fresh this house always is ! just like the air of the woods in June ! " so that if a sweet atmosphere is not in itself a reward to me, I find it in this sort of applause, of which I am very fond.

I keep watch of the kitchen odors. In pleasant weather the house is well enough without them; but when it storms, and the wide, wet, weltering world makes one turn to his own fireside — even as sorrow makes one turn to his own heart — then I think the fragrance of what our dear inimitable Artemus Ward calls “suthin’ strengthnin” mingles very cheerfully with the perfume of my roses and heliotropes.

My St. John is very fond of roses and heliotropes ; but I notice, in bleak wild weather, when he has had distant patients and an early breakfast, it is the odor of the roast and the aroma of the coffee that more particularly strikes home.

Though these perfumes are by no means disagreeable to me, still it was mainly to add to my St. John’s cheer that I suffered the kitchen door to remain ajar, as I sat and sewed and listened for the return of the solitary horseman who, early in the morning, had started off to attend a compound fracture ten miles distant.

I listened, but I heard only the sleet beating against the windows, the murmur of the fire, Lute’s chirpings, and distant snatches of sacred song from Mary Jane in the kitchen, engrossed in the week’s ironing and her annual concern for her soul.

I continued to listen, and suddenly I distin-

guished a light, quick step — that seemed to be trying to make itself very light and quick — coming up the walk. I went to the window and saw it was a muffled, heavily-veiled woman, bearing a large bundle in her arms, which bundle terminated at one end in a pair of little boots. The woman stopped when she saw me, and lifted her hand, motioning me to remain quiet.

I am not very much in fear of any mortal so long as that mortal's reason remains on its throne; but when reason begins to totter I begin to retreat. Craziness seems supernatural, and I have no taste for the supernatural. She probably divined my fear; for she lifted her veil and let me see that it was none other than Elenor.

Something extraordinary must have happened. I stepped into the hall, noiselessly opened the door, and drew her into my pleasant sitting room.

"Shut the door, please! No one must know but you and the Doctor!"

"What is it? What has happened?" I asked, obeying her order and mechanically beginning to excavate Carl from his wrappings.

"I am running away!" she answered with a little unnatural laugh. "I have left Mr. Wayne's house, and I am never going back unless I am carried back dead! Do you see this on my

cheek? It is the sign and seal of my Declaration of Independence!" with another forced laugh.

Carl, still and composed, as if fully understanding the critical step, came out of his last wrapping, slid from my lap, and went to his mother's side, standing there with the air of a protector.

"He — has — *struck* you!" I exclaimed, aghast.

Elenor bowed an assent, her cheeks and brow flushed deep with shame. We hear of one's sometime blushing for another, — it was for her husband that Elenor blushed.

"He is insane — or drunk!" I cried, questioningly.

"No, he is simply himself."

"The cruel, miserable scoundrel! You shall never go back to him!" And the Doctor's wife grew at least six inches taller.

For an hour we sat by the fire, talking. In that hour I got wide glimpses into the heart of Elenor Wayne, and made astonishing discoveries relative to my own powers as a plottist. And in that hour, how I wished for great wealth — which is power — that I might lift Elenor out of her sea of trouble and transport its author to the quiet and reflective regions of Labrador.

"I have decided the question of right and wrong in going away," she said. "How can anything be

right that is a hell and makes a demon of one ? But it is the talk that is hard to bear. I shall be misjudged and censured, and I am not brave enough to endure it without suffering. If I could only slip out of Baywood quietly and forever—just as if I had died—and let forgetfulness grow over me like grass over a grave, then my life would be almost blissful to me ! my own life—to work in and strive in for Carl's sake ! No matter in what dark corner of the world we might be, life would be really blissful ! ”

“ Then why not appear to die—both of you ? ”

Carl, overpowered by the low monotone of our voices,—purposely subdued that we might not distract Mary Jane from her ironing and her psalms,—had fallen asleep on the lounge. Elenor glanced toward him, as I spoke, with a nervous start.

“ The river is deep, and swollen with these spring thaws. Let Carl's cap be found to-morrow, washed ashore a little distance below the foot bridge ! To the world it would be an accident ; to Mr. Wayne—let it be anything ! After night sets in, the Doctor can carry you to the station. You can take the express train which leaves at one o'clock in the morning, and before this time to-morrow — ”

“ Genie,” interrupted Elenor—we had learned

to drop each other's more formal names — "I scorn to do that! What have I done that I should undertake such a terrible deception? Why may I not go boldly, in the open day? I am an independently created being, am I not? Then why should I not belong to myself without disguise?"

"My plan might spare you the talk, which you say you shrink from," said I, a little hurt at the flat rebuff my plan met. "And then it will be like Mr. Wayne to follow you and take Carl from you," I continued mercilessly.

"He will never do that — never!" and a deep vengeful fire sprang into her eyes. Sad that such a spirit must needs come to dwell behind eyes meant to be gentle and full of love's tranquillity.

"But the law might take him from you. The law is an iron power. Flesh and blood and mother-love go up in the balance when weighed against the dispassionate statutes of the State."

"Don't talk to me in that way! I would see Carl dead, gladly, rather than in the possession of that man! He has no understanding, no sympathy with him. He would murder him by inches. He would chill and wither and distort his young, loving, happy life, just as he has withered and distorted mine! Do you think I had not a thousand times rather see him laying his sweet length by

little Hittie's side, than given up to *him*?" a heavy sob choking her speech.

"But this is a poor beginning," she said after a moment, impatiently dashing the tears from her eyes. "I mean to be heroic and calm. I don't wish to go away in a frenzy. I wish to go as quietly as I can, and—since it is best—secretly."

"Where will you go, dear? You have relations somewhere, who will take you into their fold and help you to forget this unhappiness, I hope?"

"No, my father and mother were both only children, and both were orphans years before I was born. I fancy it is a sort of doom in the family—this loneliness. But even if I had relatives I would not go to them. Let me not lean upon anybody any more! I can work bravely for Carl's sake. I will go to New York. In the great city I can lose myself!"

"Mr. Seville, your good, genial boarder of last summer—he can help you, I am sure!" I said with animation.

Elenor looked steadily out of the window.

"I would not have Mr. Seville see me or know of me, after this, for the whole world! You understand, don't you, that it is a kind of disgrace—leaving one's home in this way? You may understand, but you can't realize—you cannot feel—" Her voice faltered, but her wistful eyes completed

the sentence, as she glanced about my cheerful room with its open fire and the easy chair beside it, and the gorgeous slippers on the hearth waiting for one who had never been and never would be, anything but good and faithful. I understood her unuttered words.

"It is true, poor child! You, like a brave, strong spirit, have walked through deepest pain and bereavement, growing stronger and braver as I can see; and you know how bright the sunlight is, because you have known so much shadow. And I—I am like a thoughtless, carelessly ungrateful child, conscious that my life is bright, but not as grateful as I ought to be that it is so."

We were silent for a while, and in the midst of the silence I heard the footsteps of our reliable old roan cantering up the lane.

"There comes the Doctor! I must in some way keep you suppressed from Mary Jane; for what Mary Jane knows the whole community knows at once. I will go to the stable and tell John what is to be done. Fortunately it is the night for prayer meeting, and Mary Jane will be glad to be relieved from duty an hour earlier than usual. I think her hope of salvation will be strengthened if she can have time to run around to the Tompkinses and make a call on Miss Sarah and her brother Will—to whom she is much attached. I'm so glad it

storms ! we need have no fear of visitors this evening ! ”

Mary Jane, fortifying herself with a premature supper, gladly resigned the kitchen to me, and departed in a very joyous mood for one whose immortal part was supposed to be suspended over hell by a mere thread. Then I drew the curtains and spread the board, and

“In a tumultuous privacy of storm”

we had as cheerful a supper as was compatible with the pale, sad fugitive who sat with us.

Elenor had moved rashly. There was no doubt of it. What did she expect to do in New York with one suit of clothing for herself and boy, and but little more money in her pocket than would be required to carry her there ? It was just like a poet for all the world — letting the impulse of the moment get the better of stern and invincible realities ! Now I, not being a poet, would have acted differently. I would have put cold cream on my face ; poured the tea at supper, as usual, and for a week busied myself with an investigation of Mr. Wayne's finances, and the securing of two trunks full of serviceable clothing for myself and son ; meanwhile addressing a brief business note to Mr. Seville of New York, asking him to find for me two inexpensive rooms, and to be good enough to

meet me at the ferry, on such a day, and such an hour, and direct me to their locality. Then, the week ended, I would have smuggled my baggage over to the Doctor's, and serenely stolen away, collected and comfortable, with a hot brick at my feet and a handful of funds in my pocket.

But here was this rash spirit, going away in a white heat of just indignation, the very clothing on her back hateful to her because they were something from *his* hand. I don't deny that it was a finely-toned, properly scornful spirit, but so impracticable! Starvation rather than *his* money, of course! But at the same time starvation would be apt to have its unpleasant pangs.

I had just one hundred dollars saved from my pocket money, through three years of economical management, with which I was to achieve something elegant in the line of engravings and books the next time I should go to the city. There were two little drawers surmounting the top of the Doctor's desk. In one of these I kept my money, and in the other the Doctor kept what he called his Mission fund; and it had been a laughing strife between us as to who should excel in amount of funds, the miser or the missionary.

"What will she do? How is she to take care of herself and child?" I asked with violent anxiety, as my St. John and I were alone for a moment.

"She will work, of course! I will trust that eye of hers to see its way. But she should have something to start upon."

"That is what I am thinking of, John! She has no money, scarcely. And then only think how she is going away — with a mere little satchel of things! I'm going upstairs, and I'm going to pack that smallest trunk of mine with some of my clothes for her. We are nearly of the same size, you know."

St. John was looking steadily down into the fire. I drew nearer to him, and looked down into the fire also.

"I shall give her my brown merino, for one thing," I said meditatively.

"And my second best alpaca," I added after a pause.

"Well, why are you not about it, then? There is no time to lose, if you're to pack a trunk! I should like to know what you are hanging around *me* for!" bending his brows into a frown which utterly failed in the alarming effect intended.

"O John! — just think if this awful trouble had come to you and me!" dropping my head upon his shoulder.

"Don't think of idle impossibilities, if you please!" shaking me off with great gruffness. "Go about your packing, do! little goose — there!"

What "there" meant, I may not tell ; but I felt it burning warm and sweet on my tearful eyelids.

About ten minutes afterward, by some singular coincidence, we entered the library through opposite doors, and marched straight to our hoarded finances in the two little drawers.

We looked at each other and smiled.

"I don't care for the engravings at all," said I.

"Nor am I interested in the heathens at present," said the Doctor.

So I had quite a munificent sum to place first of all in the trunk ; so that when Elenor should come to unpack it, it would be like Pandora's box, and have the best at the bottom.

Later in the evening there might have been seen — if it had not been pitch dark, and everybody had not been indoors — a solitary sleigh slipping out of Baywood.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE "TALK."



MR. WAYNE did not find Elenor at Mrs. Griffin's, nor at Jones', Smith's, or Thompson's!

She was not to be found in Baywood.

That fact crept upon him by degrees, and did not fully establish itself in his conviction until the close of the second day after her disappearance.

It was a very annoying circumstance — her disappearance. First the Doctor's wife called, and went away mystified and shocked. Secondly, all the neighborhood called, and went away shaking its head and uttering wild conjectures.

Only one clue could be arrived at. Elenor's girl privately, and under promises of strictest secrecy, told our Mary Jane that she thought — she was by no means sure, but she thought — there had been a little trouble between Mr. Wayne and his wife on the afternoon that she went away; that she had seen her go upstairs holding a blood-stained handkerchief to her face, and that she did

not come down again until she came down with Carl in her arms, and went to Mrs. Graham's.

The consequence of this profound secret was, before two days had passed, all Baywood was discussing the fact that Mr. Wayne had cruelly beaten and maltreated his wife, and that she had drowned herself and Carl in the pond.

Mr. Wayne had his own thoughts as, at the close of that second day, he crossed the narrow foot-bridge which she would have crossed had she returned that stormy night. He looked down into the dark waters below. He was not an imaginative man; but standing there in the bleak March twilight, and looking down into the sluggish current, he could not help thinking just how a face would look — if a face should rise to the surface. It would be a deathly white face, with two calm, unflinching eyes gazing straight up to him, and a line of bloody red across the fair cheek.

He shook off the uncomfortable fancy, and went home. But Baywood could not shake off its uncomfortable fancies, and Baywood set to work fishing in the pond with long, iron-hooked poles, — of course without success.

Then it was gradually assumed that she had not drowned herself — which would have been praiseworthy; but had ran away — which was *not* praiseworthy.

Inquiries were made at the station — which is something of a populous place — if, on such an evening, a woman with a little boy had got on board the cars ; but nothing definite could be arrived at. Of course the muffled man who bought a through ticket to New York, and afterward handed it to the lady with a boy, whom he assisted into the cars, was never thought of again.

It was a difficult matter for Baywood to believe that Mrs. Wayne had really deserted her comfortable and every way desirable home — for there were all her things and Carl's left behind, and she must have gone away without making the slightest preparation.

From my lips there was but one statement. She had left our house after dark, with Carl in her arms, refusing to stay all night, and refusing to allow the Doctor to take her home in the sleigh.

"*Was* her face all bruised and bloody, as they had heard?" vociferated Baywood.

"Yes," I answered with emotion, "there was the long ugly mark of a blow on it, and that blow came from Mr. Wayne. The Doctor dressed it for her — poor girl!"

Then Baywood would groan indignantly, and resume its surmises.

Mr. Wayne was very much annoyed. He almost wished they had found what they were

looking for in the pond. A case of accidental drowning was not so bad. But a runaway wife — that was disgraceful to him.

She had outwitted him. She had fled without leaving any clue to her destination, and thus rendered him powerless to act. Immediately there sprang up in his heart — where before there had been only indifference and mild contempt — a hatred, bitter and revengeful, toward her.

Very soon there appeared in the county newspapers the usual formula — "Whereas my wife," etc.

Baywood began to consider running away something of an irregularity. All this nonsense about congeniality and perfect marriage had not infected our primitive atmosphere. Every one knew that Mr. Wayne was a good provider, an industrious farmer, and a man of high moral habits.

It is the Baywood idea, in fact, that so long as a wife is not dragged about by the hair, and trodden upon, she ought to be a contented woman ; and Baywood thought that Mrs. Wayne especially could have had little cause for this reckless step. Why, nothing so shocking and entirely unprovoked had occurred since twenty years ago, when old Mrs. Jones' great aunt hung herself in her son-in-law's garret, and contributed her strangled yet restless ghost to the few legendary

cases of the supernatural that are related by wide-eyed, horrified grandchildren around our winter firesides at the present day.

Weighed in the balance against a comfortable home and a husband with many virtues, who was no worse than fifty other men one might name, Elenor's flight began to receive censure ; and after a little time condolence began to descend like gentle dew upon Mr. Wayne.

Such a pity !—just as he had got the new sugar lot cleared, and made such splendid additions to the dairy ! Of course, no one could see to affairs as a wife could ; and of course the farm would, in a measure, go to wreck and ruin.

There were two rapacious spinsters, particularly, who melted with compassion over the condition of the deserted Wayne.

For myself, I had my hands full, battling in defence of my friend, whom I knew almost as well as she knew herself.

The world has such bounteous indifference and complacency for those who die at their posts, and such bounteous rebuke for the few tortured hearts that will break away from the "bondage of death."



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CHILDREN'S DRESSMAKER.

"IN THE GREAT CITY.

"No. — GRAND STREET, *April 15th.*"



DEAR GENIE : — Every time I have taken my work in hand it has seemed as if it ought to be a pen, and as if that pen ought to be writing to you. I have waited these many days, because I wanted to give a favorable report of myself. After all your kindness in helping me into this heaven of freedom, what rank ingratitude it had been in me if I had made a failure, and been obliged to write you a dreary account of a pine table, half a loaf of stale bread, and a handful of fire — after the manner of greatly reduced people ! I am so glad and grateful to be able to give you a better account !

"The city is not half as strange and bewildering as I had imagined it might be. I had an idea of a labyrinth of palaces, full of beings whom wealth and culture had lifted almost above the grade of mortality. But if there are palaces, there are

desolate-looking houses not far from them; and if there are beautiful and cultivated people, there are the plain and lowly also. I feel a vague sense of companionship with all the hurrying, anxious, plainly clad people whom I meet. The glance of their eyes silently cheers me.

“The first morning I awoke in the great city, and went forth, mighty with speculation, to see where and how Carl and I should pitch our little tent, I saw one sad picture that made me feel how rich I was: a poor, bent, withered woman, with a face full of the ugly lines that want and rough labor, and the grovelling strife for the mouthful that should keep body and soul together one day longer (keep it together for what?) — the eyes all shrivelled and indrawn, as if the human soul that laughed through them in infancy had long ago fled away, leaving only a beast's eyes — that saw neither the sunlight, nor the glad faces, nor anything bright and joyous, but were down-bent, searching and hoping for nothing better than the filthy rags and scraps of the gutters. The poor creature made me feel how very much I had to be thankful for.

“I have two rooms,— at least they are called two rooms by my landlord; but in the generous country, where there is so much room, I think one of them would be called a closet. I can reach either

side as I stand in the centre, but you will be astonished to hear how much this little apartment contains. It has a stove—a coal stove—not much larger than a good-sized spider, that, outside, boils a minute tea-kettle, and inside, bakes three potatoes, all at one time; a table only large enough for myself and a small boy, a cupboard, two chairs, and a row of pegs upon which everything hangable is hung up out of the way. This room is my kitchen and pantry and dining-room.

“The larger room, almost twelve feet square, aspires to be my parlor and shop. I know the word shop surprises you, but I will come to that by and by. A gorgeous carpet of striped hemp covers the floor; an ingenuous lounge, that one would never suspect of playing a double part, expands nightly into a bed; and before the one large window stands that which is my best friend—my sewing-machine. This is the friend your generosity bought me, and it is dear to me for more than one reason.

“In the window and about the room hang every variety of patterns for little people's clothes, and I have an inexpensively painted sign outside, which reads as follows: ‘CHILDREN'S CLOTHES MADE TO ORDER.’ And such is my shop. Did ever before such momentous sign present its mute appeal to the world?

“For a while I was almost disheartened — seeing so many people constantly going by, and never bestowing at the most more than a careless glance at my establishment, and when my first patron stopped, scanned the patterns, and deliberately stepped down the stairs and opened the door, I was thrown into the opposite extreme of triumph. It seemed to me that I had never heard such music as her voice made when she announced her wish to have two suits made for her little boy. She did not appear to notice that everything was most unfavorably orderly, and not a scrap of work visible. I had dreaded the effect of this general newness on my first customer.

“I am glad that I chance to have a ‘faculty’ for dressing children. Nobody knows that I am merely an amateur. However, my heart misgave me as I put the scissors into the valuable fabrics that were laid before me for my first little customer’s suits. I kept outwardly an assured and confident manner. Thanks to my natural aptness for this work, the clothes were a success.

“I have not quite as much work as I would like. I am very grasping and avaricious. I not only want to earn our daily bread, but I wish to put aside something for the proverbial rainy days that will be coming. However, I comfort myself with the thought that it is rather early for summer

clothes to be in demand. On the first of May, I shall look for a great revival in business.

"I rise early, that I may have every vestige of breakfast removed before any possibility of a customer. I know that the sun is shining all over the wide country, and gilding the roofs and chimneys, and peeping down into the broader streets of the city; but I do not see anything of it until ten o'clock, and at noon it is away again. I have a poor consumptive geranium in the window, and I wish I had more sunlight—for the geranium's sake!

"Carl and I have breakfast—such a happy, frugal breakfast—and we talk to each other constantly. He is such a well-spring of joy—and at times jollity. It was hard for him to believe at first that the street was not his property as a playground; but he, too, is learning to be economical of space, and is quite content with the shop and his playthings, and my endless stories.

"We walk every morning for our constitutions and the day's marketing. And often about sunset, when the weather is good, we walk again, having a good chatty look at the shop windows. He is a brave little companion. Every morning he is awake before light, and the first thing that greets my consciousness is a succession of pats on my cheek, and this caressingly spoken formula:

N—ice, s—pendid mamma ever was! *Ain't* we glad, mamma? and mamma responds yes, and we very well know *why* we are glad.

“We have not yet become sufficiently settled to go to church. I doubt if it would be quite safe to leave our establishment, with all its wealth of tissue-paper patterns, entirely unprotected for two hours! But I have sometimes thought if we could slip into Mr. Seville's church (I have searched that out, and find it half an hour's walk), some Sabbath morning, it would be pleasant to hear his voice. He is so good! and he is the only religious person I ever knew who makes the Right way a joyous way.

“Hopefully thine,

“ELENOR.”





CHAPTER XIX.

A PAGE FROM ELENOR'S DIARY.



ELENOR'S journal of the same date gives a less cheerful version of affairs :

"ADRIFT, *April 15th.*

"Yes, adrift ! It is a terrible, and yet a delightful responsibility — having the entire care of myself and Carl ! I have but just summoned fortitude to look things in the face, since the first morning when I woke in the great, rushing, preoccupied city, and felt what a miserable dead leaf I was, drifting upon the great ocean of life !

"First, I searched all through the morning papers. I had not been quite sure what I would do ; but now I began to think it would be well to think what I *could* do. Vague notions of being a copyist, governess, milliner, cook, or a laundress, flitted through my head. But I knew that, having Carl with me, all these employments would be impracticable, and nothing was to part us but death. I must do some kind of work, that would allow me to have him always by me.

“Finally I came upon the advertisement of a small basement, ‘suitable for a shop or for hair-dressing. Apply upstairs.’ And the thought struck me that I might make children’s clothes in this little basement, if I could only rent it.

“I found the place. The rent was monstrous — twelve dollars a month — but I thought if I got even a moderate supply of work, I could afford to pay it ; and anxious to escape further costly living at the hotel, I had my trunk put into a hack, and little Carl and I drove to our shop in state.

“Carl and I and a little trunk, standing in an empty basement-room in the great city ! Five years ago, if this scene had been photographed to me as one of the pictures of my future destiny, how perfectly improbable it would have appeared !

“But here we were. I looked in my purse. Just fourteen dollars ! The patterns, and a stove, and table, and bed, and a curtain for the window, and some wood, and something to eat, must come out of that fourteen dollars. It was such dreary arithmetic to me that I sat down on the trunk and cried,—just as if crying would make the money go any farther !

“Carl regarded me with wondering silence for a moment. I never cried before him, in my life, until then. I suppose he thought sorrow was re-

stricted to little boys who couldn't tell E from F. Finally he flung his arms about my neck and pressed his cheek to mine — just as I have often comforted him — and said, 'My big mamma crying! *Don't* cry, darling! I'm so sorry! don't cry any more, mamma!' But his words failed to check my sobs. Then, as if seized with a sudden happy thought, he plunged into the various contents of his pockets, and from the strings and buttons, and pencils, that usually made up his stock on hand, fished out a little box of 'Worm Lozenges,' one of which he gravely pushed into my hand. 'Eat this, mamma!'

"It was such a rebound from the despairing to the funny, that I laughed while the tears were yet hot on my cheeks; and the laugh did me more good than the tears. I pretended to devour the all-healing lozenge, and to immediately feel better; while Carl watched me with a certain serious joy, just as a surgeon might regard the life he has saved only by the most consummate skill.

"Genie told me to unpack the trunk before attempting anything else, as the clothing would be rumpled from lying too long. I mechanically unbuckled the straps and put the key in the lock. It was packed so full that the lid went up with a bound.

"First of all there rose to me Genie's favorite

odor of violets, faint and sweet as a dream of meadow-land. Then I took out one by one the many things she had managed to cram into so small a space. Why, I saw that I should need to buy nothing for myself for months to come ; and then there were ever so many nicknacks that had never been thought of by any but dear, mindful Genie ! — a little mirror, a needle-book, a toilet-cushion, two or three pocket volumes of poems, glove and handkerchief boxes, a cunning little lamp over which a cup of tea could be boiled, and a bag of cookies and gingerbread labelled ‘ Lunch for Trojan ’ — enough things to set one up at housekeeping. Near the bottom I found a large, plethoric envelope. Outside were the words, ‘ Buy a sewing machine with some of this, and it will be your friend until Providence brings you better ones.’ Inside, there was such a roll of bills, big and little, that, with the mist in my eyes, I could hardly count them. When I did, I found that I had enough to begin business with very comfortably.

“ We worked hard all day — Carl and I, and spent oceans of money, and went to bed very early, after a chaotic supper of bread and milk and cookies. Next day I fitted up the little room which we call the dining-room, and put the finishing touches to the shop in the way of a brilliant

assortment of late patterns. The room wore a beautiful business air.

"I waited so many days for work that did not come, that I began slowly and gloomily to hate my fellow-creatures because they didn't want children's clothes made. I placed the sewing-machine before the window, and day after day watched and waited. People, at the most, would glance at the patterns and then heartlessly pass on. My little capital was melting away in spite of my economy. One night I went to bed so hungry that I am sure I understood something of the first pangs of starvation; but little Carl, nestled close beside me on our hard but not uncomfortable bed, had eaten his fill of supper, and I thanked Heaven that he had not yet felt such pain.

"The next morning—because it is always darkest just before the dawn—a lady came in, and my heart jumped into my throat when she said she wanted two suits made for a little boy, and pleasantly complimented the patterns, and asked Carl his name and made an angel of herself altogether. In the afternoon she came with her child, and brought the material for his clothes.

"I measured, with feelings she could hardly have guessed, my first little customer; with work in prospect, I ventured to break my last dollar; and so Carl and I dined quite sumptuously, and

starvation was as indefinitely postponed as possible.

"I have work enough to employ me only half the me; and it is really hard-work—trying to 'live.' Yet this is heaven compared with the old life.

Yesterday I thought I saw Mr. Seville in the street. I was so sure I could not mistake his clear bright face, that I turned to a shop window and called Carl's attention to some toys until he had passed. The world grew dark for a moment, and it seemed as if the solid stones shook beneath my feet. It was an earthquake of the heart! He walked swiftly by, humming some happy air. The thought that he should be so happy, while I am struggling for life almost at his side, brought me to my senses, and I walked on, never looking back. I am wicked to think of him at all. Heaven will punish me!


"And yet how can that which uplifts and inspires me to all high and good thoughts be wicked?"





CHAPTER XX.

SEVILLE AS PROVIDENCE.

UGENE SEVILLE sat in his pleasant study with his feet in violet velvet slippers embroidered with golden pansies — the gift of some kind lamb of his flock, who, ten to one, bowed her head more in adoration of her handsome young shepherd than in devout prayer to the throne of Grace. It was such a room as one knowing him would have expected to see ; a room full of sunlight, and books, and pictures, and the “frozen music” of statuettes ; with a carpet like emerald moss, dark, rich furniture, an open piano, and a bouquet of green-house roses that gave the April air a breath of June.

The ready growler might say that it was no atmosphere for a “man of God” to breathe, — this room, with its delightful distractions and feminine daintiness and sweetness of appointments. But it depends much upon what sort of a man of God a minister is. It depends upon whether he accepts life as a howling wilderness or as a beneficent privi-

lege. I have met ministers who appear to take solid comfort in being wretched; and not only in being wretched, but in making wretched; not only having a confirmed hankering for pillows of thorns, but wishing the whole world to give up its soft cushions and "come to Jesus"—as if the spirit of that Good Man were far away from the common walks of life, and could be found *only* through paths of rigorous gloom!

Seville was writing the last page of a sermon with the kindled eye and swift, strong hand that told the inspiration of his thought. It was like his usual good fortune that it was the last page; for at this moment there came the double ring of the postman, and soon afterward his housekeeper—appropriately wrinkled and appropriately clad in mourning, finding her tranquil happiness, after life had rung for her its changes of girl, wife, and widow, in keeping this young pastor's villa in charming order, and seeing that his dinners were immaculately served—entered with some letters.

Seville wrote the last line with triumphant dash, and turned to inspect them. An obese cream-colored missive, mailed not in Baywood,—since I lay claim to a little 'cuteness,—where our Postmaster, keenly alive to the Wayne scandal, was watching all letters going and coming with more

than ordinary interest, was the first to receive attention, and it read as follows :

“ A Baywood acquaintance of yours — or rather two acquaintances of yours — for I am sure you remember little Trojan — have mysteriously disappeared — gone away, independent of everybody, to do something heroic in New York. If, passing along Grand Street, you come upon the merest fraction of a shop, bearing a sign relative to the making of children’s clothes, and having a struggling geranium in the window, you will have found the field in which our desperate fugitive is engaged. The only New York acquaintance we have, aside from you, is now absent in Europe. I can’t sleep o’ nights unless I know that somebody is keeping a little indirect watch over her. I suggested, in the first place, that she should ask your help and influence in finding some suitable work; but she peremptorily refused, and said she would not have you see her or know of her for the world.

“ Therefore, whatever your generosity prompts you to do, you want to make a sort of Providence of yourself, and move mysteriously, your wonders to perform. She is too abominably proud to recognize anybody among her old acquaintances; but she will not shy at deeds that a discreet and well-meaning Providence is capable of performing !

“ I abstract a page from my diary, written on the

night of her departure, which will give you some of the particulars that led to this step. I hope *you* will not blame her. There will be plenty who will do that. I think it a pity that she had not killed Wayne before going. But the Doctor says I am at times a little too radical in my views. I enclose Elenor's letter to me, which will give you her full address. There can be no harm in your reading it, I am sure ; and if ignorance of what I have done in making you a confidant will be any bliss to her, you will be very careful not to betray me. I feel perfectly justified. It is her good, and not her whims, that I am to regard.

“Address your reply to the Doctor. I think our P. M. has a sharp eye on all letters (I trust he respects the seals) addressed to Elenor's friends, and I am very sure that Mr. Wayne has a rankling doubt regarding the sincerity of my grief at her departure. May God be with her and bring her life out into the sunshine again, is the prayer of

“GENIE GRAHAM.”

Seville eagerly perused Elenor's letter. At one portion of it two quick tears leaped to his eyes, and dropped upon the page. Then he read the leaves from my journal — the condensed recital of many wrongs, and this last fatal wrong — the savage blow.

Seville sprang to his feet, with his usual kindly eyes emitting sparks.

"That wretch! I suppose he is like those of whom that great type of goodness — Jesus — said 'Forgive, for they know not what they do;' but I am not a type of goodness, and if I had him here I would thrash him, by Heaven, until he should go creeping away on all fours like the brute he is — only I beg pardon of the brutes! Idiot! Gorilla! Scoundrel!" and Seville punctuated these remarks by jerking himself out of his writing blouse and fiercely kicking off his slippers.

Then he caught sight of himself in the mirror. If one is angry even unto swearing, or downcast even unto tears, there is a great deal in obtaining an accidental reflection of one's self. Seville saw himself and grew calmer.

"To think she should be in the city a whole month — passing me in the street, perhaps, so near that I might have touched her garments, and I as ignorant of her presence as the stones of the pavement! I will just go to her at once!"

But here the admonition of the Doctor's wife came back to him.

"No, it will not do! I know her sweetly proud spirit. She thinks this step which she has taken may look like an appeal to me. But she has no right to so misjudge me. If she once knows that I am

aware of everything, I can't help her ; for she will see right through such a flimsy Providence. Mrs. Graham is right. I will move mysteriously." And he disappeared within his dressing-room to make himself ready for the street — all the while pondering earnestly upon the best way in which he could manifest himself as a magnanimous and still purely disinterested Providence.


10





CHAPTER XXI.

AUSTIN WAYNE AND THE DOCTOR'S WIFE HAVE
A LITTLE UNPLEASANTNESS.

HAT is there more delightful, when it rains and amusements flag," says a sarcastic writer, "than to sit together by the fire and cut up some absent one?"

This was the pastime the greater portion of the people attending a tea-party at Mrs. Thompson's were engaged in, one afternoon in the last of April.

At our tea-parties women arrive, some of them, as inelegantly early as one o'clock, bringing sewing and knitting, and all are assembled before three. At five o'clock, invariably, the hostess goes into the kitchen and puts the tea-kettle "over,"—a cheerful move that sends a wave of increased animation over the talkative conclave assembled in the best room. After the kettle is put over—and the reader may rightfully suppose it to be put over the briskest kind of a fire—the hostess reappears to her guests, in reversed cuffs and a large check

apron, and mingles again in the conversation until the oven becomes hot enough for the baking of her always marvellous biscuits.

In metropolitan gatherings of this nature, the repast is kept suppressed, and under lock and key, if need be, until, the proper time having arrived, the doors are thrown open and the majestic board bursts upon the charmed vision.

In Baywood we of course manage differently. In preparing the tea everything is transparent and above board. Indeed, I think it is made a special point that guests may see how lavishly cream enters into the composition of biscuits, and with what profligacy prime butter goes into the fried spring chickens. Half the time it is an illy-disguised, sinful pride — and not a pressing desire to say what *she* heard about the A, B, or C under process of dissection — that brings the hostess at a halt before the parlor door, with a dish of amber honey in one hand and a plate of lovely queen's cake in the other. Artful hostess! — lashing the palates of her guests, displaying her own munificence, and having a slash at the victim, all at the same time.

At this point in the afternoon services our husbands begin to arrive. The idea of afternoon visiting and gossiping is eminently silly to these husbands, but as tea-time draws near I notice the

occasion begins to take on attractions for them. I say our husbands ; but this is speaking in a broad, Baywood sense. My St. John, for one, is never beguiled into parties of this kind, unless on some extreme joyous occasion, like Christmas or Thanksgiving.

Austin Wayne, for another, was not given to these whirlpools of dissipation ; but after Elenor's disappearance he never neglected an opportunity to present himself, drooping, melancholy, yet profoundly calm, before the pitying eyes of society.

On this occasion he came late. Mrs. Thompson, who had sent him a special message and postponed the "drawing" of the tea until he should arrive, rushed upon him with an avalanche of quite tender reproaches ; and after he had made the round of the little throng, mournfully shaking hands and replying with faint smiles — as if words were altogether too weak — to pathetic questions in regard to his health, the Misses Dean beamed upon him like Hope and Faith, and made room for him on the sofa between them — a thorny trio !

There were at least two persons present who did not address pathetic inquiries to him ; those two were Mrs. Griffin and the Doctor's wife.

Of course no one referred directly to his peculiar bereavement. Male Baywood was inclined to regard him a little gruffly, thinking that he might

not be entirely blameless in this unfortunate matter ; but there seemed to be a general desire, on the part of female Baywood, to embalm him with sighs, and softly wrap him in the rose cotton of compassion.

After the long hour at tea, during which Mrs. Thompson repeatedly apologized for the poor quality of everything on the table, fishing in this transparent manner for additional laudations to the excellence of the entire repast, most of our husbands again felt how very frivolous tea-parties were ; and after a half hour's uncomfortable lingering in the parlor for form's sake, they departed to the profounder affairs of farm chores.

Mr. Wayne was among those who remained. He had made a move to go, but was affectionately assailed and driven back to the parlor by his hostess. He sat down with a look that seemed to say, "Certainly, I submit. I remain in this festive throng. I'll look on your happy faces and listen to your cheerful voices ; but what can lift up my wronged and crushed spirit ? Go on with your lightheartedness, but don't expect smiles of *me*—when my soul is bowed to the dust. Here will I sit with my dumb grief, and try to endure !"

"No, indeed, Mr. Wayne ! Don't think of going home now. You would only be very lonely there, you know." This by the eldest Miss Dean, in

her tenderest accents. It was the first allusion to Elenor's flight that had been made to him, and the tea-party held its breath to catch the reply.

There was no reply. Mr. Wayne understood the eloquence of silence. He rested his head on his hand and took on increased melancholy.

Engaged in a spirited romp with a baby who graced the gathering with his guileless presence, I did not hear how deftly Miss Dean and her aids drew Mr. Wayne out of his sad reticence; but after a time I became aware that he was speaking of himself.

"Ah, well," he said with a long-drawn sigh, "I shall be content when I get my boy back again. I have my boy to live for still. To have him with me—to teach his young mind—to correct the fatal faults which his mother has bequeathed to him—to have him henceforth for my hope and solace—this is now all my aim in life. I will have my boy—my dear, only child—if he is yet living," brushing his hand across his eyes pathetically.

"Ah! what can possess a woman—a wife and a mother—to turn a home into ruin in this style?" said Miss Dean, lifting her gaze to heaven and then letting it fall upon the "ruin" before her.

"Mercy knows I would bear everything before taking such a step!" said little Mrs. Whiffles,

casting her pale, vacant, blue eyes around for approval.

"Bear everything!" exclaimed Mr. Wayne, turning his stony glance upon little Whiffles, as if he did not clearly comprehend the drift of her remark.

"Oh, I don't mean to say that Mrs Wayne had anything so very hard to bear. Oh, no, nothing of the kind!" said Whiffles, dimly conscious of having implied something.

"The whole town knows there is not a better provider anywhere than you are, Mr. Wayne!" said Mrs. Dean, with a view to mollify.

Mr. Wayne lifted his hand deprecatingly. "I've done the best I could for her. Of course she brought *me* nothing. I married her simply for herself. I tried to give her a home as comfortable, at least, as the home I took her from."

"I should think so, indeed," said Mrs. Dean encouragingly.

"I am not that kind of a man to marry for riches or for beauty," Mr. Wayne pathetically continued. "I thought I had found something better than wealth or beauty—a good and faithful wife!" Another movement of his hand to his eyes.

"Ah!" sighed the two Misses Deans—who were as ugly as Hindoo gods.

"What *did* she do, that you struck her in the way you did?" abruptly asked a miss of fifteen,

not yet cured of the childish habit of asking questions.

Mr. Wayne shut his teeth as if he wished he had the miss of fifteen between them, and then said coolly, —

“ I knew she would make capital out of that. It is all right. Let the blame rest upon me. I can bear it. Emerson says ‘it is not what the world thinks of a man, but what he thinks of himself.’ I make no explanations. Let me be blamed. No one will ever know under what circumstances — ” He wisely let his sentence remain unfinished, and settled into a sphynx-like gloom.

“ To save your own life, maybe ! ” suggested the younger Miss Dean in a tragic whisper.

Mr. Wayne gave her a startled glance, as if to say, “ How could you have guessed it ? ” and did not refute the suggestion.

The guileless baby, who had been riding to Banbury Cross on my knee for the last five minutes, could no longer interest me. I put him in his mother’s arms and went up to Mr. Wayne and said, —

“ For shame ! ”

“ Are you addressing yourself to me, madam ? ”
Mr. Wayne evidently considered his “ madams ” very crushing, from the manner in which he pronounced this one.

“I am, sir!” I also looked upon my “sirs” as being rather scathing. “I say for shame, because it is a shame for you to sit there and permit such innuendoes to be uttered as that which I have just heard, ‘*To — save — your — own — life — perhaps!*’—that is a beautiful suggestion, truly! I defy you and I defy anybody in this room to recall a look or act of Elenor Wayne that can warrant such a thought. And yet you permit it to be uttered as if it were a sharp guess at the truth. I know, good neighbors, all about the circumstances of her going away. The blow across her face that brought the blood was given because she stood between it and a score of others like it, which would have fallen on the tender flesh of little Carl as a punishment for the heinous crime of not remembering a certain letter. He was going to teach his young mind, you see!—was going to flog his boy—his dear, only child—you remember!—until the blood would have run down his back!—going to make a hope and a solace of him, you know! You were all surprised that she should leave this good provider! I am only surprised that she did not leave him six years ago, when he as good as turned her dying mother from his doors, and begrudged every penny’s-worth that went to her from his bountiful farm. Or that she didn’t leave him four years ago when he suffered little

Hittie to die without troubling himself to bring the Doctor, who might have saved her life if he had been called in season. Or that she didn't leave him last summer, at the time of the accident at the pond, when he stood on the bank and shouted 'Save my horse!' while she, his own wife, was drowning before his eyes!"

"Pray go on!" interrupted Mr. Wayne, white with rage.

"All her life, under his roof, has been full of deep and bitter wrongs. Because they have been silently borne, you haven't guessed them. It was only at the last moment that she would tell even me—her true friend. You want to know what can possess a woman to turn a home into a ruin," facing the Deans. "*I* want to know what can possess a man to win as his wife a girl who has, as he says, nothing but her own good, tender, faithful heart to give him—nothing but her own youth, her hope, and the great confident love that stakes all on this one throw!—what can possess *him*, that he should win such a life to himself, and then deliberately make a ruin of it? All your fine dairy farms in the world—for I know that is what you are thinking of? kind Mrs. Dean—are not worth one fibre of such a costly ruin! And you, Mr. Wayne, dare to put on your martyr's face and go about whimpering over the goodness and the

faith which *you* value more than money! You may delude these people if you can. *I* understand you perfectly, and *I* say FOR SHAME!"

The words had rushed so rapidly from my tongue that although Mr. Wayne and the whole family of Deans alternately opened their mouths to speak, neither could slip in so much as a syllable edgeways. When silence ensued it was a dead silence, until Mrs. Griffin — with a gasp as if she had been holding her breath — brought her hands together and exclaimed. —

"Gospel trewth — every word of it!"

Mr. Wayne, with a dark, purplish face, rose to his feet with clenched hands, as if he would have relished hitting me hard and square between the eyes. The Misses Dean grasped either arm of the sofa, and glared upon me severely. My remark regarding their intentions on the Wayne farm had hit hard.

"Tut, tut! you are dreadfully excited, Mrs. Graham!" said Mrs. Dean.

"If I am, I am glad it is in defence of the absent and not in the noble work of dissecting them." Mrs. Dean had devoted the greater part of the afternoon to this business.

"Mercy me! you look as if you were going to eat us!" cried little Whiffles, evidently meditating a flight from the room.

"I am angry, I admit. I am angry with you all, if you can all take sides against Elenor—the woman who has never uttered one unkind word against any of you, and who told me with her own lips that your censure would be the hardest of all to bear. She would like it to be, she said, as if she had died; and wished that forgetfulness might grow over her like grass over a grave. Think what it is to die twice in a lifetime! Do you imagine she had no thought of the dreaded alternative of her domestic hell? Penniless and almost friendless, she has gone out into the world, asking nothing but her child's love, out of the bountiful blessings that should have been showered upon a heart so gentle and true as hers!" Foolish tears rushed to my eyes, and my voice faltered. I wished I had been a man, that I might have gone on, angrily and indignantly.

Mrs. Griffin sobbed audibly, and the Deans lowered their glaring eyes.

"She needn't ha' gone away, anyhow! She could ha' had a home at *my* house, by Jerusalem!" and our host, Abraham Thompson—or Deacon Thompson, as he was commonly called—having sworn this his biggest oath, stalked out of the room, leaving his speech to take care of itself.

There was danger of the tide setting in against Mr. Wayne. He turned rigidly toward the door:

"If you choose to pay attention to the ravings of this woman's tongue," indicating "this woman" with a dull, dead look of venom, "I have nothing to say. I decline to defend myself against any but worthy antagonists!" adding in a whisper that was very much like a growl, as he passed me, "You have given me a clue, my good woman."

As the door closed upon him, the tea-party began subjecting Mrs. Griffin and the Doctor's wife to considerable cross-questioning.

"Why didn't you tell us all this before?" asked the party.

"Because I thought I should sometime have the opportunity to address my remarks to Mr. Wayne himself. I don't believe in striking at one's back."

Notwithstanding striking at one's back was a characteristic of the tea-party, it warmly applauded this sentiment.


Only the Deans occupied conservative grounds—entrenching themselves in the trite conviction that there were always two sides to a story, and "time would tell."

Nothing troubled the repose of the Doctor's wife that night except Mr. Wayne's last remark. I had unwittingly conveyed to him the idea that I had anticipated Elenor's departure, and that I very likely knew of her whereabouts.



CHAPTER XXII.

SEVILLE'S FIRST APPEARANCE — AS PROVIDENCE.

LENOR'S hours after six o'clock belonged to herself. From nine o'clock A.M. until six o'clock P.M. she felt herself to be more or less a servile slave to the whims of that portion of the public who wanted, or rather did not want, children's clothes made. But at six, down came the window curtain, inexorable as fate, shutting off the brilliant patterns from the passing eye ; and no matter how the repentant world might suddenly yearn to have its children's clothes made, the shop was closed for the day, and the world might wait, — and learn how very pleasant it was to wait.

Night came early to this little basement. Elenor used to sit by the small stove after the curtain was drawn and the lamp lighted, and she and Carl listened for the first prophetic murmur of the tea-kettle and recall the great glorious sunsets of Baywood, comparing them with the scanty allotment

of gray light which the heavens, to the best of their ability, vouchsafed the little cellar ; and then she would scan Carl with anxious eyes, afraid that he might be growing pale and transparent in this new atmosphere.

Carl was what I have heard old nurses call a "mother-boy," — that is, a boy more than usually fond and clinging in his affection for his mother, contented with indoor amusements, and even given to the fascination of dolls and the laborious sewing of their garments, if, with these quiet pastimes, he could be near his mother. He was no baby, understand, but a kind of infant gentleman, or gentlemanly infant, ready at any time to leave his solitary sports of leap-frog and circus, in that portion of the room which he had set apart for himself with an invisible fence, and come to Elenor's side with that grave, protecting tenderness in his manner that had been exceedingly comical, if it had not been so very pathetic.

So, being a mother-boy, the contracted, unpleasant basement was bright and attractive to him, and he thrived in it, — not as he might have flourished on the genuine milk and sunlight of the country, but still he thrived.

It was the evening of a day that had been more than usually full of disappointment and failure. A woman, who had promised to bring her little girl

to be fitted for a blue silk with six bias ruffles, — a wealth of work in Elenor's estimation — had not called. A boy's suit had been sent back "a mile too large." She had broken two needles, and had but twenty cents with which to buy supper and the next morning's breakfast.

Rent was paid a month in advance. In the commissary department there was a whole bushel of coal, a little paper of tea, and a dozen milk tickets. Prosperity enough! and why should her soul be cast down? But it was cast down, nevertheless. Even the woman at the bakery where she had regularly purchased her rolls and loaves noticed her pallor and despondency, and kindly asked if she were ill. At the same time she was careful to put but six biscuits in the paper bag and not, on any account, seven! Such irregularities as that seventh biscuit would have been, had never yet made bakers rich.

Three apples to bake for supper, and two eggs for breakfast, and the merest little slice of butter — how meagre it all looked to one accustomed to the opulence of a farm — and yet it had absorbed her whole capital.

It was nearly seven o'clock, and although the lengthening April day still lingered in the sky, it was deep night down in Elenor's shop; and Carl was beginning to meditate his night-gown and the

long story of Jack and the bean-tree, to which Elenor had added the most amazing sequels, when there was a rap at the door. It was Providence rapping, but Elenor was not aware of it. Possibly it was the lady with the blue silk and its yards upon yards of bias ruffling. She turned the lamp to a brighter radiance and unbolted the door.

"Do you make children's clothes here, ma'am?" asked a gentleman with bowed shoulders and silver-white beard, in a voice as of bronchial difficulty.

"I do, sir,—but—I close the shop at six," with a sight regret in her accents, as if sorry that her rule was so inexorable

"I wish merely to leave an order, ma'am;" coughing severely in a style that would have moved a heart of adamant.

"Step in out of the damp air, sir," said Elenor with ready kindness.

Providence came in out of the damp, and resting his gloved hands on the back of a chair, spoke as follows:

"I want some boy's clothes made to send off into the country—two suits for a boy about the size of that young man," indicating Carl. "Want them made up good and—and—serviceable—better, you know, than anything at the clothing stores."

"Yes, sir," said Elenor, briskly, feeling as a gold-digger must when he strikes a vein of the real metal. •

"You see, ma'am, I leave everything to you—selection of material, style of jackets, etc. Now, can you tell me about what the cost may be?—the best beaver for both, with silk bindings, and the best and brightest of gilt buttons."

Elenor regarded him rather attentively, wondering what there could be in the theme of gilt buttons to change his voice to one of such clear and musical animation; but he began coughing again as hopelessly as ever. She took a note-book from her pocket and began to make rapid calculations. Ah! could she have seen the eyes of Providence as they watched her downcast face!

"I think everything can be purchased for eighteen or twenty dollars, sir," she said, trying not to appear astounded at the enormity of the sum.

"And what will be your charges for making them—in your best style?"

"I will make them for three dollars each," she answered, timidly.

Providence coughed and hesitated. He was hoping she would say ten. What provokingly cheap sewing!

"I *can* make them for two and a half," said Elenor, mistaking his silence.

"No, no ; I am satisfied with your first price, ma'am ! I was thinking of some linen suits also. I want two linen suits made for the same party—something with braided collars and bands, and—and—" Providence began to investigate the patterns in a helpless manner.

"Here is a pattern for summer wear, very jaunty and graceful !" said Elenor, coming to his rescue, and rejoicing over vein No. 2. "I know just how much material is required. Hm—let me see !" and again the quick fingers figured in the notebook.

"About six dollars will buy the linen, but there will be more work in making it up than in the heavier suits," regretfully.

"How much for the linen suits ?" gruffly.

"I can't make them for less than four dollars each, with all this braiding," apologetically.

"Very well ; here is money for the material and the making," counting out a roll of bills and laying them on the table.

"Thank you !" said Elenor, with a hearty ring of joy in her voice, at which Providence coughed savagely. "I will commence the work to-morrow. About the size of my boy, you say ?" drawing Carl to her side.

"Yes, ma'am ! which reminds me that he should be rewarded for making a lay-figure of himself ;

Here, little one!" tucking a crisp dollar bill in his hand.

A sudden blush flew to Elenor's brow. She opened her lips to say that her boy was not in need of charity; but Providence had darted out of the door with an alacrity that was wonderful in a man so bowed with years.

He went home and scolded himself for a bungler. How had he really aided her, after all!—giving her a laborious job, and only paying her what it was worth! He tore off his disguise with audible impatience, and sat down with that scantily furnished basement shop never out of his thoughts, and fell to devising new phases of Providence.

"I *thought* somebody would come!" said Carl, knowingly, coming out of the motionless attention with which he had listened to every word.

"You thought so, did you?" said Elenor, forgetting her indignation in the good fortune that had come to her, and kissing him with happy fervor.

"Yes, I did! You see, mamma, Mr. 'Ville [Seville] told me that if I ask God *ever so many times* for anyfin', maybe He would do it; so when we went to the baker's to-night, I kept whispering and whispering to God like this: 'God, I wish you would *please* send some work to my mamma! God,

I wish you would *please* send some work to my mamma! God, I wish you—”

Elenor caught him up in her arms with a laugh that sounded like tears, and tears that looked like smiles.

“—and so I *thought* somebody would come!” said Carl, determined to finish his remarks.





CHAPTER XXIII.

PROVIDENCE — HIS SECOND APPEARANCE.

TAKING the *rôle* of Providence was no idle play. The task required a delicacy and *finesse* which not everybody would have been capable of.

Cheered by the fact that his first attempt in this line had been, despite its clumsiness, something of a success, Seville thought he would venture upon a more brilliant stroke.

“What sort of a Providence have I been?” he communed with himself. “The whole business is a wretched bungle, unless I can remodel it in some way. I have placed a week of hard work in her hands, paid her what it is worth, according to her views, and flung away money on some mythical urchin who has no need of clothes. Pshaw! I disgrace my *rôle*; I will have the clothes returned as being too small for the boy, fly in a rage because they failed to suit, fling them at the feet of Trojan, and scorn to take back the paltry sum invested in them — passing for a choleric old chap with no end

of a fortune — and never repeat that style of the Providential ! ”

This was the substance of Seville’s review of his first appearance. It had been a bungle, to be sure ; but by a little ingenious manœuvring he hoped yet to make it the benefit he had intended.

What to do next ?

Sitting by the pleasant open fire — for the damp April night made such sitting very comfortable — he involuntarily looked about him, contrasting his elegant surroundings with the barren little shop in which he had stood half an hour before.

He was a confiding believer in the fact that “ all things work together for good ; ” and yet how could he keep down the wish that rose in his heart ? — the wish that she were sitting there in that other easy chair, so near that he could, if he chose, place his hand on hers and make sure that she was a solid reality, and not the vision he had so often created for himself — all his own — clad in the garments he had earned — eating the bread his hands had worked for — that painful, sad look, all cleared away from her brow, and her cheek getting back the roundness and tender rose-tint he had seen there last summer.

That was the wish that was in his heart, and he bravely strove to put it away from him. It was like trying to wrest something from the good

Father's hand instead of waiting His wiser will. In the summer-time he had wished a wrong wish, and then had striven to crush it out of his heart, and to forget it in busy and cheerful labor. And now it seemed as if that summer wish were being answered. Here she was, almost at his side, and he having the power to assist her, to help her feet keep the steep path she had chosen, to put his own strong shoulder to the cross she was so bravely bearing.

This brought him back to his position as Providence. How he succeeded in his next move can best be shown from Elenor's stand-point.

One morning, before the mythical boy's suits were completed, her landlord made his appearance. In order to assuage all uncomfortable forebodings on the part of the reader, I will briefly state that this landlord had very recently enjoyed an interview with Providence.

"Sorry to interrupt your work, madam, but I have decided to make some alteration in my business, and I shall want this basement at once. Rent refunded, of course."

"At once! Oh, where shall I go?" considerably startled by the abruptness of his statement.

"If you please, I thought of that myself, and cut this notice from the *Herald* for you. It's a good locality, terms reasonable, and if you will go

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and take a look at the premises—I'm in something of a hurry, you see—I think you'll be apt to like them."

Elenor took the advertisement mechanically, illy concealing the regret that she felt. She was already attached to this poor little basement, and the rent was so very reasonable.

"About six blocks up the street, on the first floor, and I'm sure you will be satisfied with the change," said the man encouragingly.

"I will see the place at once; and I will try to vacate these rooms as early as to-morrow, at least."

"You will oblige me much. I will engage a wagon for you. Sorry to have occasioned this interruption to your work."

"You are very kind; thank you."

"Oh, don't thank *me!* don't *thank* me," getting the accent on the right word at last. "It's nothing. I'll send a woman to help you pack. Hope you won't lose more than a day. Very sorry, I assure you." And the landlord got himself and his regrets away and laughed in his sleeve, thinking how this proud young woman, who would allow no one to help her, as Providence had stated, was being helped in spite of herself.

Elenor immediately put herself and Carl in street attire, and sought out the new place. It was a shop on the first floor, sandwiched between a neat

confectioner and a well-to-do milliner. The two large windows were already hung with curtains, whereon was stamped in neat gilt letters, "CHILDREN'S CLOTHES MADE." A most singular coincidence, to say the least! The door was ajar, and entering she saw a gentleman seated by the pleasant open grate, engaged in a newspaper. The floor was covered with soft thick matting; there was a large table for cutting out garments, and the former occupant seemed to have carelessly left in one of the windows a hanging basket of luxuriant ivy.

The former occupant would have carelessly left many other things, but Providence — as I said before — was compelled to act with moderation.

Opening from the main room were two smaller ones, clean and well lighted, — just the rooms for kitchen and sleeping apartment. All was very pleasant and desirable, as her landlord had predicted; but the rent would, of course, be beyond her means.

"Do you think the rooms will suit?" asked the man, who had laid aside his newspaper on her entrance.

"I was intending to take them if I — that is — if they are not too expensive."

"The rent is twelve dollars per month," he responded briefly.

“Twelve dollars! Why, I’ve been paying that sum for the merest little shop in the world!” said Elenor surprised out of all diplomacy.

“Rents are down. But you can be permitted to pay fifteen, I presume, if you are strongly opposed to paying twelve,” with a quiet twinkle in his eyes. It is needless to explain that he, also, had made the acquaintance of Providence.

“Oh, I am delighted to find the rooms so cheap!” exclaimed Elenor, too much in earnest to notice his subdued raillery.

The man received the exclamation with perfect composure.

“These things are to be removed, of course!” said Elenor, indicating carpet, curtains, and ivy with a general sweep of her hand.

“No, madam, they are to remain. Former occupant and owner is likely to return in a year, and to a good careful tenant these few items are included with rooms. I hope they please you.”

“Oh, perfectly!” inclined to believe she was dreaming, and that she would awake presently, and see the crumbling walls of her little basement.

“Then here are the keys. There’s a coal cellar downstairs with a little coal in it, I believe, which you will use. Good gas-fixtures, you see; and water comes into both back rooms. Very desirable place — for the price.”

“It is singular that the curtains have the very sign on them that —”

“Pardon me — not at *all* singular ! Thousands of Children’s Clothing Stores being vacated every day, and — coincidences will happen ! Commonest thing in the world ! You will pay rent on the first of each month to this address,” giving her a card. “I trust you will find the locality both pleasant and profitable. Good-morning, madam !”

And Elenor and Carl stood alone in their new shop.


Providence, strolling past at early gas-light, caught a glimpse of a ruddily burning fire, brilliant patterns upon the walls, and Elenor, with radiant face, just lifting her hands to let down the gilt-lettered curtains. And Providence laughed softly to himself, and felt that this time he had accomplished a very neat thing.





CHAPTER XXIV.

"COMPLIMENTS OF AUSTIN WAYNE."

LENOR'S days, not without their busy and at times wearisome labor, were very tranquil and cheerful. If business was sometimes dull, and there seemed not the demand for children's clothes there should have been, the sombre prospect was sure to be lit up by some anonymous sunbeam which Providence managed to cast upon her. The clothes for the mythical boy had been returned in choleric scorn; and the bronchial old gentleman had nearly coughed himself to death, making Elenor understand once for all that he did not care a d—ash what she did with the clothes. *He* never wanted to see them again. What business had a grandson to outgrow—but no matter! she could keep them! keep them! That was all he asked! And then he had coughed himself out of the shop, banging the door behind him, and leaving the poor children's dressmaker mute with astonishment.

"How rich and careless and ill-tempered he

must be!" Elenor thought. "He will recover himself by and by, and send for the clothes. He could easily enough find some poor child whom they would fit.

But the clothes were never sent for; and after a time Elenor ventured to put two of the rejected suits in the window for sale, where they made a fine display.

Once an express box arrived, purporting to hail from a station not far from Baywood, and containing a vast and varied stock of country niceties for the pantry—for which "dear Genie" was ardently thanked.

An occasional book or picture, or fragrant growing flower, was brought by errand boys from whom no sort of intelligence could be obtained; and there was nothing to do but attribute them to the direct or indirect generosity of "dear Genie."

I began to feel very guilty—receiving gratitude that was wholly due to another.

Sometimes—rare times—when she felt strong enough to control even the throbs of her heart, she would dress herself and Carl in their simple best, and go to Seville's church. In a seat near the vestibule—a veil partially hiding her face, and Carl cautioned to make no sign—she used to sit and fancy herself nearer to Heaven than any one in

all that devout and attentive throng, such music and such inspiration sounded in his words.

It was all wrong to Carl. He remembered how he had been tossed in that minister's arms, and what wonderful fairy-stories that minister had told him; and there appeared to be no satisfactory reason why he should not run up the broad aisle, when all the people rose to go, and put his own chubby hand into that of Mr. 'Ville, as of old. His young feelings were very much hurt whenever he saw his old friend's face, and was yet bound by an iron restraint not to recognize him.

On this point mother and child were at war.

"Ah! wert thou in the cauld blast."

Elenor often found herself humming these words. We are sometimes haunted by certain songs, without ever knowing why; and this song haunted Elenor. She sang it unconsciously, almost. One day little Carl took up the refrain, and then she became aware that she must have repeated it often and often to have taught it to Carl, who was not a very apt musician as yet.

"Mr. 'Ville sang that, didn't he?" asked the cherub.

"When, dear?"

"Oh, once when there wasn't any snow, and the clover and the grass and things were growing,

and the birds were singing di-di, di-di, di-di ! and the cherries were ripe !" answered Carl, who had a good deal of rough poetry in his thoughts, and preferred to make this long statement, instead of simply saying " last summer."

" Do you like Mr. 'Ville ?" asked Elenor. There was a sort of bitter sweetness in hearing Carl gossip about him.

" No, I like oranges !" he answered with great gravity.

" And don't like Mr. 'Ville — good Mr. 'Ville ?" asked Elenor pleadingly.

" No ; don't like *you*, neiver !" looking extremely phlegmatic.

" Why — Carl !" Elenor regarded the infant with a shocked face. She had been told that cities were bad for children. Was he getting bad so soon ?

" Like — love," said Carl, assuming an argumentative position. " I like oranges. I *love* Mr. 'Ville, — and you, too !" walking away with an air of having floored somebody.

" Ah, little sweetheart, I stand corrected !" And Elenor turned to her sewing, relieved of her fear regarding the evil tendencies of cities. Truly he was a brave little companion, and with him how could she be anything but almost happy ?

It was a rainy evening in midsummer. Steadily pouring rain, without wind or lightning — such a

rain as makes the hills rejoice and sets the valleys laughing. Such a rain as makes the city exceedingly wet, draggled, and forlorn.

But however draggled and forlorn the city might be, Elenor had work that was to be taken home at nine o'clock, rain or shine. It was not far to go—about ten blocks, with bright lamps all the way—and she was a rapid walker. Carl, bravely sitting up, although his eyes were becoming very dreamy, wanted to accompany her.

"Why, you see how it pours, dear! Mamma would have a drowned boy before she had walked half the way. Lie down on the lounge with kitty, and see if you can count fifty before mamma comes back. It won't be but just a few minutes."

"I wish I could have just six peanuts, then, obediently taking himself to the lounge, as he named his extravagant wish.

"Very well; lie very quiet, and I'll bring you sixteen. See, I have turned the gas on so bright for you and kitty!" going toward the door.

"Mamma—good-by," said Carl, sitting up and holding out his arms. What had impelled him to say that? Days, months, and years afterward, those three little words echoed through her life.

"Yes, good-by, little peach, for a minute!" and kissing him playfully on both cheeks she went out into the weltering streets.

Coming back, "damp, moist, and uncomfortable," and weary after the day's busy sewing, the bright light behind the drawn curtains greeted her with homelike cheer. She stopped to make a little purchase at the confectioner's—a neat conical paper of the coveted peanuts—and then she was on her own threshold and across it, and the door closed behind her.

The kitten was lying alone on the lounge.

"Carl, here's mamma!" she cheerily called. There was not the slightest sound in response. She looked swiftly through each room—a brief search.

Ah, the little rogue was lying under the table!—no, not there! Under the lounge, of course, and chuckling over his practical joke!—no, not there!

"He has gone out, and will be lost!" Her hand was already on the door to follow him, when a card lying on the floor at her feet caught her gaze. Lifting it, she read slowly—with eyes that shrank from every word, and still read on—these words:

"Compliments of Austin Wayne. We shall be on our way to the West before you can even inform your tender sympathizer, Mr. Seville. I said you would beat yourself. Farewell."

The paleness of the dead stole over her face. She flung her arms upward, and fell heavily, without a gasp or a groan, upon the floor.



CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

THE gas burned brightly all night long in the little shop on Grand Street. Even when daylight began to beat down the shadows everywhere, there was the bright jet, still shining like a blazing star behind the drawn curtains.

Seville had of late instituted very early rising as one of his habits ; and another recently acquired custom consisted in walking down Grand Street, opposite the establishment for children's clothes, and throwing one furtive glance at its windows, to make sure that safety still abode with its inmates. Early as he might be, he usually saw a white hand sprinkling the basket of ivy, or had a flitting vision of Carl's newly brushed curls and "shining morning face."

On this morning the close curtains and the absurd light behind them — for it was now broad day and shops were being opened everywhere — brought him to a halt. Thrice back and forth he

walked, and then, certain that something was wrong, he crossed over and rapped at the door. If sickness or trouble of any kind had fallen upon her, it was no longer in him to stand aloof behind the mask of "Providence."

There was no answer to the rap and the louder one that followed it, and with a sharp thrill of fear in his heart, he opened the yielding door and entered, almost stumbling over the prostrate form that was lying just where it had fallen hours before. A low, stifled moan was all that the rude contact elicited.

A thought of robbery and attempted murder first flashed into Seville's thoughts, as he bent over her, and he glanced about the room, expecting yet shrinking to see splashes of blood, and little Carl lying where the assassin had left him, very still and white. He did not stop to consider that the premises furnished small inducements for such murderous burglary. Nothing was visible on the neatly swept matting but the bit of pasteboard, crushed and bent, that had struck Elenor to the floor as if it had been an iron hand.

Seville lifted her and carried her to the lounge, a dead weight, enveloped in the horrible, heavy stupor that sometimes precedes raging delirium. Looking around him helplessly, his eye caught a single word on the card at his feet.

" Ah, it is *that* demon's work, then ! "

It was not a tie of flesh and blood, but only a gentle bond of regard between Seville and little Trojan ; so he did not faint or stagger over Mr. Wayne's compliments, but put the card in his pocket, turned off the flaming gas, and came back to Elenor's side—putting his hands on her burning forehead, and feeling the flying pulse in her wrist.

One fact was apparent to him : she must have medical aid at once. He wrote the address of a physician of his acquaintance, and going out hailed one of those convenient small boys, sure to be found at all times on all streets in a large city, and bade him bring the Doctor mentioned on that scrap of paper, and the sooner he should bring him the better for the small boy.

A telegram, having to drop its lightning wings at the railway station, and crawl to Baywood by stage, reached me thirty hours later, saying :

" Trojan has been stolen. Your friend is very ill. Come at once, if possible. "

I had opened the letter with a smile. " Some new feat of which Providence is inclined to boast ! " I thought, and this bitter news was like a blow in my face. And yet, I might have known ! We are always certain we might have known.

Mr. Wayne, on the flagrant ground of desertion,

and by a skilful appliance of money, had obtained a divorce, left his farm in charge of a trusty agent for sale, and departed, not at all certain what region in the West would be his destination. When it was known that he was about to leave Baywood, I sat down and hastily wrote a warning note to Elenor, telling her that I had reason to believe that Mr. Wayne was going to institute a search for Carl, for the purpose of taking him into his own hands, and beseeching her to take the child to Mr. Seville and let him be his protector. I was somehow possessed of the idea that the child, once placed in Seville's charge, would be as safe as if guarded by the flaming wings of a cherubim. I folded this note, and addressed it simply to Elenor's street and number. As time proved that this note never reached its destination, I shall always believe that it passed from our postmaster's hands direct to Mr. Wayne, for a small consideration. But I have no proof.

"Have you any commands for New York," I asked of my St. John, handing him the telegram, and folding my arms with a composed and determined air.

"That poor girl is doomed," said the Doctor gloomily, after he had read the message. Elenor had written such cheerful accounts of herself, and

we were both beginning to look forward to many happy years for her.

"Nonsense; I have no belief in doom! The only doom she has is this vampyre of a Wayne; and such a doom can be fought against. I am going, my St. John!"

"I believe no one has said you shan't go," said the Doctor in mellow rebuke to my abrupt manners.

So I went.

I hope all my woman readers will appreciate my heroism, when I declare that I did not stop to even think of a travelling suit—that quiet, wordless passport to conductors and all fellow-travellers of refined tastes—but took the next train in my second-best silk and voluminous duster, with a satchel of clothing, the blessing of my St. John, and his fourteenthly spoken admonition, "Don't talk too much!"

So Elenor had been ill three days when a somewhat frenzied-looking woman, in a dusty gray silk, leaned from a cab window and watched the cabman ring furiously at Seville's door.

Seville himself answered the ring, and, recognizing the woman, in spite of her dust and her frenzy, came down the steps and shook hands with me.

"Is she *very* sick?" I asked.

"The physicians think it doubtful—her recovery," his voice faltering a little. His face was so colorless and anxious, after the animation of our greeting was over, that I involuntarily exclaimed:

"You are sick, too, are you not?"

"Oh, no; if I appear so, it is only from remorse at having been such a careless Providence to your poor friend."

Not having the ability to see through a millstone, I accepted this explanation, nor dreamed of the deeper feeling behind it.

"Tell me where to find her! I'm going to her at once," I said.

"I will go with you. Bless you for coming so soon!" and he ran up into the hall for his hat.

Bless *me*! Why should I be blessed for coming to see my dearest friend, who was dangerously sick? It struck me that Mr. Seville had grown rather emphatic in his manner.

He returned, gave directions to the driver, took a seat beside me, and we rode rapidly away to the hospital.

"If I had a mother, or sister, or any sort of home but a forlorn bachelor home, to have thrown open to her in place of having her taken to the hospital!" he exclaimed. "But she is in one of the best wards, and my housekeeper—a good,

tender-hearted old lady—has been with her almost constantly.”

He then told me all that he knew relative to the disappearance of little Carl. Mr. Wayne had of course watched for an opportunity when the child should be left alone. He must have waited patiently; for on that fatal rainy evening Elenor had for the first time gone out and left Carl alone in the shop.

“He left a card, saying that he should leave directly for the West. There is the nine o'clock express for the West; if he told the truth he must have taken that train. It was ten hours too late to do very much; but I telegraphed to distant stations along the lines, describing Wayne's face and manner, and giving a pen photograph of little Trojan. But the answer was invariably ‘No such parties on board.’ The morning papers mentioned a serious accident, on the route I imagine him to have taken, by which several passengers were killed and many injured. The chances are fifty to one that Wayne was not among them, and yet I cannot help thinking of that accident.”

“Their names were given, I suppose?”

“The names of two were not learned. It would have been swift vengeance on Mr. Wayne—spiriting away that boy, not because of love for him, but because he could thereby crucify the mother's

heart! But I don't think vengeance could have been so thoughtless as to include little Trojan in its wrath. There were three children killed. However, I suppose death came as kindly to them as if they had choked with diphtheria or burned up with scarlet fever. It only seems harder—their death?"

We reached the hospital. "No better, sir!" said a nurse, reading the question in Seville's eyes before he had spoken.

We passed up a long corridor—wide - flung doors open here and there, showing cheerful rooms, with neat, narrow beds and open windows, and convalescents sitting up in easy chairs; but through one door, slightly ajar, I caught a glimpse of that dread presence that is seen often in hospitals—a straight, rigid figure, lying upon the narrow bed, with covered face and folded hands.

"Carl, darling, mamma is here!"

These words, spoken in the broken, unnatural voice of delirium, told me we had reached our patient's room, as we paused at a half-open door near the extremity of the corridor.

A placid old lady, sitting in an easy chair by the bedside, rose as we entered, and Seville said to her, —

"I have brought you relief, Mrs. Doty. This is the patient's dear friend — Mrs. Graham."

"Genie Graham, I suppose," said Mrs. Doty. "She has been talking of you a great deal to-day, if you are Genie!"

I am afraid I nodded at random during this introduction and the housekeeper's kindly greeting, for I was bending over Elenor.

"Nellie, darling! don't you know me—your old true Genie," I said, trying to catch her roving glance.

Her eyes looked through me and beyond me, and there was not the slightest glimmer of recognition in them.

"I told you good-by—only for a minute, you know—I shall be home soon—indeed, I shall!" Then after pausing a moment, "Yes, he's carried him away—all the love I had—I'll reach the cars before—no, they go so fast, fast, fast!" And then back again to the old refrain, "Carl, Carl, mamma's home again—where are you?"

Some of her beautiful heavy hair had been cut off to admit of suitable applications to her head; a dull, deep crimson glowed in her cheek, and her fevered lips melted the thin flakes of ice, which Mrs. Doty almost constantly applied to them, as if they were coals of fire.

Ten days she lay in this terrible fever—starting from light, fitful slumbers that were fuller, if possible, of keener imaginings than her waking de-

lirium, to murmur in swift, confused language, sometimes of baby Hittie—sometimes of her own childhood—of her mother—of Mr. Wayne—of her friend Genie—but oftenest and wildest of little Carl. Sometimes she spoke of Seville, but very rarely, and then in a murmured, suppressed tone, which only Seville himself could have interpreted.

One night, engaged in reading—for grown accustomed to her incoherent talk, I had tried with books to beguile the weary time of waiting—I at length became aware of an unnatural silence in the room. I lifted my head and listened intently. I was sure I could hear soft, regular breathing. I stole to the bedside and bent over the patient. The lurid flush had paled in her cheeks; the eyes were no longer half open, but heavily closed; and—was there breath? I held my ear closer, while my own pulse seemed to stand still.

Yes, she breathed—and softly, oh, so softly! It seemed as if one word from my lips, one jarring footfall, would make that breathing cease altogether. I went noiselessly from the room, sought the apartments of the physician, and told him of the change.

“Do nothing at all; keep away from the bed; don’t let there be even the rustle of a garment. Sleep may perhaps be her salvation; but nothing

can be decided until she wakes. When she wakes let me know."

All that night I watched beside her. The sun came up, but I tempered the light, and she slept on. Mrs. Doty came and floated in her quiet way into my place, and motioned me off to bed. There was a lounge outside the door near the great window of the corridor, and I stretched myself upon it for what is tersely termed a "cat-nap." The early breeze, cool and sweet with its flight through dewy foliage, came in and touched my face like the soft hands of a beloved one. Fatigued with my protracted vigil, I yielded to its mesmeric spell and slept profoundly.

I was in dreamland still, when I became partially conscious of a hand on my shoulder, shaking me with provoking gentleness.

"Leave me alone, St. John! I *can't* go to breakfast, now! don't want any!" I said, in a peevish tone.

"Mrs. Graham, Elenor is asking for you!" said Seville's voice. It seemed to my confused senses that he spoke with agitation.

It was nearly noon. I had slept like a brute. I sat up, rubbing my eyes vigorously, and instantly became wide-awake and calm.

As I entered the room, Elenor turned her eyes upon me—her own clear, rational eyes—and

smiled faintly and wanly, a smile much like the winter sun, that gilds only for a moment the cloudy twilight, and is swallowed again in gloom. What was there in life that she should smile ? ”

“ Mr. Seville has told me of your — ” she began to say, thinking to round off a whole sentence of thanks ; but her weak voice faltered, and dropped into silence.

I looked at Seville. He then had been the first on whom her conscious vision had rested. What a real, practical, as well as theoretical Christian he must be, was my thought, interesting himself so deeply in my poor friend !

He was looking at my poor friend just then, and my poor friend was looking at him, and the look between them was like a line of light stolen from Heaven.

I stooped and kissed Elenor lightly on the forehead, and then the physician ordered everybody from the room except the nurse.

“ She will live now, if she doesn’t fall into low spirits,” he said, when we stood outside the room.

“ Thank God ! ” said Seville, fervently.

“ — and the nurse ! ” added the Doctor, jocosely.

Convalescence was a slow process. It is easy enough to “ get well ” if that mainspring of life, a Happy Heart, throbs in the breast. That is the grand tonic, — the richer medicine than all the

Phosphates of Iron and the bitterness of ancient Hostetter !

There is one other thing that assists recovery, — a less agreeable medicine ; but nevertheless a medicine : a *purpose* to get well ! a resolve that this or that aim SHALL be accomplished, ere death is yielded to. Elenor had such purpose ; the purpose to find her own again, though that finding should be the task of a lifetime.

And so she slowly recovered.


When able to endure the journey, the affairs of the little shop being closed, and the career of children's dressmaker ended, she returned with me to Baywood — the wan, pale, great-eyed shadow of the woman who " ran away " six months before.





CHAPTER XXVI.

WHY CARL SAID "GOOD-BY."

ITTLE CARL, cuddling the kitten in his arms, kept himself awake with animated reflections on peanuts just five minutes. Then his eyes began to droop,—closed once, opened again, looked reproachfully at the gas jet for a moment, and then closed once more, his senses gently detaching their last hold upon reality and floating off into the charmed realm of dream-land.

A stealthy hand turned the door knob, but stealthy as it was, Carl, who had struggled like a hero against sleep, heard it, and bounded off the lounge with a joyous exclamation.

The door opened, and his father stood before him.

Carl stared blankly for a moment, and then shrank back.

"Well, how do you do, sir!" said Mr. Wayne, attempting to speak affectionately, and holding out his hand to him.

"I thought it was my mamma," declining, after the frank manner of childhood, to shake hands.

"Your mamma wants me to bring you to her right away. Get your hat!" commanded Mr. Wayne, taking a card from his pocket, and beginning to write something thereon. It was not to be a forced abduction, but a decoy.

"Mamma said she was coming back in a minute," said Carl, slightly puzzled.

"No ; she has had to go in the cars, and you and I must hurry, or the cars will go off and leave us. We can buy candies on the cars. Where's your coat?"

Carl ran for his coat, and his father hurried him into it, with a hollow attempt at playful affection. "There, now," dropping the card ; "we're all right. Now for a nice long ride on the cars !"

"Oh goody ! and I'll sit with mamma next the window !" And Carl, almost inclined to like this suddenly affectionate parent, clung to his shoulder confidently as he lifted him into his arms and went out into the street.

In the cars, at last, Carl looked eagerly about among the passengers, and his expectant little countenance fell visibly.

"I don't see my mamma ! Where is she ?" he asked, his mouth beginning to quiver. With a sudden jerk the train began to move and rumble

slowly out of the city. They had not been a moment too soon. Mr. Wayne was in luck.

"Never mind; she is in the next car, asleep. She's tired, and doesn't want you to trouble her. You may lie down on this seat and go to sleep, too, and in the morning I will take you to her. See — here are some candies for you."

Carl took the confections, turning them over and over in his hand. Somehow he had no appetite for candies just then.

"I wish I could just *see* my mamma!" he said; and then his little breast, which had been heaving and heaving with its suppressed disappointment, gave itself vent in a loud wail. Half the passengers turned their heads to see what could be the matter with a child that it should utter such a cry of grief.

Mr. Wayne put his mouth to the child's ear, and said in a tone too low to be heard by any other: "If you make another loud noise or cry one whimper, I'll throw you out of the window into the river, as sure as you live!" Of course he had no intention of putting this gentle threat into execution; but he felt that such crying would be apt to attract awkward questions and sympathies, unless silenced at once.

Carl checked himself with a mighty effort. Waiting all night before seeing his mamma was

better than being flung out into the dark river and never seeing her at all ; so, after a few choking sobs, he became silent, unavoidably soothed by the swifter gliding motion of the cars, and the box of candies. And then he had not learned distrust. Belief sustained him,—belief that his mamma was close at hand, and perhaps would come to him herself by and by from the longed-for "next car."

Presently the young head began to nod drowsily. It was late in the night for such a little head to be upright. Even older ones were adroop here and there. Mr. Wayne took a cushion from a neighboring seat and made Carl a pillow of it, and laid him down quite gently and kindly, resigning the whole seat to him. "Now you can go to sleep, young man !"

Damp puffs of air came in at the open window, and he took out his handkerchief and spread it lightly over the child's head. I trust it was a grain of comfort to him in after years, to think that his last words and his last act toward little Carl were very kind.

At the next station he left the cars for a moment to get something in the brilliantly lighted refreshment-room. There was a sort of reaction after so much skilful and daring manœuvring, and he resolved to take one good steadying dram of brandy.

The brandy was swallowed, and the bar-keeper

frantically overhauling the till for change to the bill Mr. Wayne had given him, when the engine bell began to ring and the cars to move.

"In one instant, sir ; in one instant ! You'll get aboard easily enough. Damn it !" and the bothered bar-keeper rushed into the back room for the missing fraction. Mr. Wayne, not disposed to lose that fraction, waited ; and the train rapidly gathered momentum.

"There, sir !" the man returned and clapped the change into his hand. "Now rush, or you're left !"

Mr. Wayne first glanced at the money, and then plunged for the door. The last car shot swiftly away from the platform. He pursued it at his best speed — and in vain. The engine sent back defiant puffs, telling him he was hopelessly left behind. One or two invariable depot loafers laughed at him. Indeed, there is scarcely anything more ludicrous than to see an intelligent human being pursuing an express train when it is running under full speed. He came back panting with the race, and stood on the platform of the depot, watching the receding red light on the rear car.

What was he to do now ? Should he let the boy go where the fates might take him ? No, for the fates would advertise him ; and the news-

papers would make a note of the boy whom nobody claimed, and he would be returned to his mother ; and then this sweet revenge, which had already cost him some money and much time, would come to naught. There was nothing to do but telegraph to some station, and have the boy put off and kept until he could arrive by the next train.

Mr. Wayne paced up and down the platform for a time in a vexed frame of mind — telegrams being expensive — and then walked around to the telegraph office and wrote his message. But before he had given it to the operator, some words came clicking over the wires that made his own quite uncalled for.

"Rear passenger car down the bank at Hemlock Bend — several passengers killed — all more or less injured — car a total wreck."

On the heels of this came another message, giving further particulars. Mr. Wayne shrank away from the little group gathering about the operator. It was in the rear passenger-car that he had left little Carl asleep.

Murderer !

It was an accident, of course ; a not uncommon railway accident. Yet why did that horrible word keep uttering itself to his smitten conscience ?

Pshaw ! Most likely the boy was safe. Little people always escaped if any one did. He stole

back within hearing of the operator and his circle of listeners.

"Faith, I don't see how a single soul escaped!" said one man.

"— eight have been brought up for dead," read the clicking words. "Two men, four women, three children—"

Again Mr. Wayne shrank back into the darkness, and resumed his walk on the deserted platform.

A hand-car was put on the track, and half a dozen men got aboard to run down to the scene of accident, not more than six miles distant.

"Lucky you were left, sir!" said the barkeeper to Mr. Wayne, as that man, slightly pale, called for another dose of brandy-and-water.

"Yes, sir, very lucky!"

"No friends aboard, I hope," noticing the gray tint of his customer's cheek.

"No, sir!" draining the glass. "And now, since no trains will be going out to-night, I think I'll try a hotel."

If the boy was alive he would hear of the fact. If he was dead — he had rather not see him.

At Hemlock Bend, near midnight—the rain steadily pouring just as it had poured all day—little rivulets gushing down the steep mountain

side, gurgling across the track, and plunging down into the darkness of the gorge below — the signal lights dimly showing the curving track, with the wet glistening rocks above and the tops of the sombre hemlocks growing below — and just distinguishable above the sound of the rain and the low rush of waters somewhere down in the darkness of the gorge below, the distant rumble of the approaching express.

"*No danger !*" said the signals ; and what could an engineer do but run on confidently, though beyond those cheerful lights the mountain lay in darkness ?

The rumble deepened to a roar ; the click of the wheels along the track and the panting of the engine drowned the sound of the rain, and of gurgling waters, and the sombre hemlocks shook with the tremor that filled the air.

The train came sweeping around the bend. There was only one very weak spot in the rain-besieged track. Over it thundered the engine and half the coaches, and then there was a shudder up and down the mountain side, and the avalanche of rock and gravel caught in its resistless grasp the rear car, and plunged with it into the blackness of the gorge below.

It was a ghastly sight by the light of lanterns down there — when the men who bore them could

reach the spot — the turbulent torrent, swollen by the rain, sweeping under and over the jagged rocks and fallen trees, and brawling angrily around the crushed car and the crushed men and women, who had uttered no sound or shriek in the awful suddenness of the shock that had hurled them down to death.


It was an angry stream at best, but now the storm had added strength to its fury, and with its foamy jaws it had caught something from the splintered wreck—a little dark bundle : it looked like nothing else down there in the roaring gloom, —and hurried it away and away, striking it against the rocks here and there, and finally casting it aside under a black thicket of hemlocks.





CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DOCTOR'S WIFE CONCLUDES HER HISTORY.

OVEMBER 16TH. — Everything that can be done, by parties of somewhat restricted means, has been done, in the hope of obtaining some clue to the whereabouts of little Carl, and without success.

The world seems small enough at times ; but it becomes illimitable when we undertake to find a little lost atom like this. And we are all disheartened.

Elenor, who it seems would be most disheartened of all, has the most hope ; and yet I can see that this suspense is telling upon her fearfully. I never knew a woman so passionately fond of her child. She has hung all his clothes in a wardrobe by themselves. It brings the tears even to my childless eyes — seeing them hang there so empty ! — blouses, and jackets, and baggy little pants, some of them with neat patches on the knees ; his last summer's hat with its faded blue ribbon and broken

brim ; and down on the floor the little outgrown shoes and the box of unused playthings.

If these things are so eloquent to me, it is no wonder that Elenor stands before them sometimes, and touches them with faint, trembling hands, uttering the pet names which she used to utter to the boy who wore them, and pressing them to her face, moaning in a tearless, sobless way, thinking that no one hears her.

She has quite recovered from the fever ; but her cheeks are not growing round and rosy again — as they ought, with this bright autumn weather and my St. John's tonics — and her eyes are restless, and full of such sharp sorrow, I am sometimes afraid that, instead of coming to know the peace of resignation, they will —

November 17th. — I was interrupted yesterday by Elenor, who called to me at the foot of the stairs in that peculiar voice with which she had once summoned us to the death-chamber of little Hittie. I dropped my pen, making a huge blot on the fair page of my "log-book," and ran down, expecting I knew not what.

Elenor's hat and cloak were lying where she had flung them on her return from the post-office, and she was standing with an open letter in her hand, her face — I never saw a face like it — so full of

anguish, and yet an anguish mingled with a strange, odd joy.

"God is good!" she said, putting the letter in my hands.

I read as follows :

"It is useless for you to make any farther attempt to find the boy. It was my intention to take him with me to California, and if anything could be made of a child so marred with hereditary traits, educate him. A railway accident, which occurred at Hemlock Bend last summer, decided otherwise. I had left him asleep in the rear car a short time before the accident. He probably died instantly. As I consider formal burial ceremonies the most ghastly folly that a civilized world is capable of, I allowed the remains to be buried with those of others, who were mutilated past recognition. I see a wise fate in this. Yet, if you regard it as a calamity, you have only yourself to thank for it : you have destroyed a home, and have killed your child. I only hope that you may be blessed with a good memory as long as you live.

"AUSTIN WAYNE."

I stared at this letter, with horror and grief and rage battling for mastery within me. God's

goodness ! I could not perceive God's goodness ! I saw Austin Wayne's devilishness !

"I have thought it all over, and I see that God is good," repeated Elenor. "Anything is better than that Carl should be alive and in that man's power. You remember I said that I had rather he would die. I am taken at my word. Yet it was so cruel, so cruel ! If I might have looked in his eyes but just once, before the dear life went out of them ! Ah, I know *now* why the darling held out his arms to me that night, and said—"

But here her brave calmness left her. She sank into a chair, and, burying her face in her hands, sobbed as those people sob whose hearts, as we say in our trite language, are breaking.

October 16th. — A year later. Seville did not come out to Baywood for his August, as was his intention. I am sure Elenor had looked forward to this August, as I thought she would never look forward to anything again, after Carl's death — and the manner of his death. But Seville did not come.

She had spoken truly. Knowing that Carl was dead — cruel and final as death might be — was sweeter knowledge than knowing him to be alive, with his fresh young life growing day by day prematurely bitter and old, and his child-heart day

by day forgetting the mother who never could forget him.

So after the first long, dark days of grief passed away, she stood up once more in the sunlight, with even a pale rose tint stealing back to her cheek, and a deep clear light to her eyes—not the sparkle of happiness, but that serene radiance which tells of sorrow overcome.

She seldom went out to our social gatherings, and our social gatherings, out of revenge for being slighted, called her “queer”—a peculiarly suggestive and scathing epithet.

In the spring she worked with me in the garden. We made vast improvements, and had quantities of new shrubs and bulbs on our hands, and positively nothing was thought of, for days at a time, but this garden of ours, and what it was going to be—“in August,” Elenor was fond of adding.

One day she said to me, as we were at our work, “Genie, I believe there is a subtle affinity between me and my mother earth. I am never so happy as when digging in this soft, rich loam!—putting the little seeds to sleep in it, and making beds for the bulbs, and smelling its fresh, damp fragrance,—coming right down to the level of all these cunning little scampering bugs and beetles, and forgetting the great world overhead that has so many wearying griefs. The beetles and I, down here in

the beautiful dirt, with our simple wants of rain and sun, what do *we* care?" patting the soil around a gladiolus with dreamy nicety. "When I am making a garden, even the grave takes on cheerfulness. It can't be so very bad, after all, lying down here in the cool, dark earth!"

"It must be very pleasant, without doubt,—only, from the lesson which these seeds teach us, we don't stay in the ground. We rise again."

"Yes, it must be so," answered Elenor; and then she wrote the name of "CARL" in the smooth soil, and scattered along the letters the seeds of amaranths. "If I had but his grave here to make it bright and sweet with the flowers he loved so!" she sighed.

We had visited Hemlock Bend soon after the receipt of Mr. Wayne's letter. Those who had taken charge of the mutilated bodies told us all had been recognized and claimed by friends, except those of one woman and two children—thought to be her own. One was a boy. His poor little fragment of a body was placed in the same grave with his supposed mother; and the autumn leaves had fallen upon the heaped clay of the nameless mound, and the cold November clouds were scattering their snowflakes upon it, as we stood there, and thought of the bright, beloved child whose bed it was.

"We will not disturb the grave," said Elenor.

"It can make no difference." And then we sadly returned to Baywood.

We had a busy summer, and Elenor was the impersonation of Fairy Fingers, — always helping and always vanishing. She mastered the little instruction I could give her in music, and then went on into the field of musical composition and gave us new songs and ballads — some of them very sweet and beautiful. She painted clever little pictures for our dining-room, made superb hanging-baskets for the windows, and put graceful poetizing touches to the ruder handiwork of Mary Jane.

"A productive nature," said my St. John; "she puts her own rich individuality into everything she does. She gives to the common air a breath of genius. What a pity it is that she is not the centre of a home — her own home — with husband-love and child-love springing up about her, and making her life a success!"

"Pshaw, St. John! It is nothing but the infinite undying vanity of you men that makes you think a single woman must necessarily be wretched and her life a failure! I am sure Elenor is quite happy as she is, having no care and no burden, and nothing to do but whatever pleasant work her productive nature may suggest."

"How long since you discovered the perfect

happiness of single life ? ” asked St. John, with an injured air.

“ You should never descend from high argument to reflections of a personal nature, Doctor ! But since you *are* personal, allow me to say that I consider Elenor happier as she is, because no one but a St. John is worthy of her ; and, unfortunately for her, there is but one St. John in the world, and he is mine. Ahem ! ”

The Doctor gravely resumed his Medical Review article ; but in spite of himself, I saw a little smile lurking under his moustache. Even my St. John cannot utterly despise the sweet incense of praise.

Seville's letters always arrived on Saturday. Elenor made a secret of them, she fancied ; but she could not make a secret of the brighter eyes and gladder smile which she brought down to us every Saturday night.

One Saturday night she came down with a gay, brave look on her face, that might have misled most people, but it did not mislead me. I read disappointment in it.

“ I have a letter from Mr. Seville,” she said carelessly, “ and he writes that it may be impossible for him to visit us in August. So our violet paper ” — she had remembered the tint he liked — “ in the best bedroom is love's labor lost ! ”

The next Saturday there was no letter at all. The next Saturday a letter came — a very kind, friendly letter: she handed it to me to read — discussing at length the merits and demerits of certain new books, giving an account of a sea-beach picnic, and a thorough report of the weather in New York — to all of which was signed the tranquil words,

“Most sincerely your friend,”

— as if one is “sincere” only when *out* of love!

Elenor was very slow to doubt, and very slow to reproach — even with the reproach of silence. Besides, why should she reproach? There had been no confession, no word of what is termed “love-making” — nothing at the most but one wild little speech spoken in her ear, in that bright midsummer two years ago. They had loved each other. And she loved still, — that was all.

Seville was not one to dissemble. He could hold but one woman in his thought of thoughts — at the same time!

When he rose before his congregation one summer morning, directly before him there sat a beautiful girl — beautiful, not only in her bright blonde face and hair like braided sunbeams; but beautiful with soul-light, beautiful with the angelic peace and hope that sometime illumines the faces of good young women who have never loved, and

who consequently have never known bitterness or sorrow.

When he met that dark, sad-eyed woman in Baywood, he "liked" her. It seemed natural that he should.

" It was as some one *always* dear
Had gone away an hour before,
And come again "

— to meet him, in the person of Elenor Wayne.

But when his eyes rested on this sweet and perfect face, upon which the soft light from the great stained windows fell like celestial benediction, he — loved ! This must be destiny.

The beautiful girl looking up to him thought to herself, in a sweet, tremulous way, " Ah ! now I know why I have never loved ! My life has been waiting for *him* ! This is destiny."

Six weeks from that summer morning, there came, close upon one of Seville's friendly letters, a brief note, written hurriedly, as by one who was too happy to linger over the crossing of t's :

" MY FRIEND ELENOR : — Will your kind heart give me congratulation ? I am to be married — "

The note went on to give the name of the beautiful girl, the day of the wedding, and to rhapsodize the boundless grace and goodness with which God

had gifted his bride. A happy, boyish, brotherly note — written as if in utter ignorance of its power to give pain.

Elenor read but the first two lines. She refolded the note and put it in her pocket. Then she sat with folded hands, and looked out through the open window upon the sweet summer fields. This, then, was her August.

There was no response when Mary Jane summoned her to tea ; so, after waiting a few moments, I went up to her room. She was doing some wonderfully fine sewing for me, and I sometimes took the liberty to command her to put it aside. Doubtless she was lingering over that last sprig of ivy in satin-stitch.

She was leaning upon the window-ledge, her face hidden upon her arms ; and the honeysuckles swinging to and fro were touching her bowed head like caressing and pitying hands.

"Dreaming?" I asked, tapping gently on the open door.

"Oh, is it you?" starting, as if really asleep. "Yes, I've been dreaming in the draught here, and I feel — chilly. Some tea will be refreshing. Don't wait ! I'll be with you in a moment," shutting the door, laughingly, in my face.

What she did with herself in that moment I do not know ; but she came down presently, very

tranquil, and bravely swallowed her tea and talked intelligently with the Doctor.

"A game heart!" said the Doctor, when I came to tell him, months afterward, of what had happened.

Since that August afternoon I have never been able to see very much of the old cheerful, singing, hoping Elenor in this pale, still, and forever busy woman. A perceptible tinge of gray has stolen over her brown hair, giving a singular appearance to one who is yet on the sunny side of thirty; and her eyes are so large and so sad that I resolutely avoid meeting their gaze. They are like embodied dirges.

She works as busily and persistently as ever; but she paints no more bright little pictures, and the guitar hangs unstrung and dusty in the hall closet, where no one ever intrudes upon it, unless an umbrella or a pair of rubbers is wanted. She is not gloomy or moody, but always has pleasant words to speak, and frequently a smile comes to her lips; but the smile never rises to her eyes, and she lives on like one whose heart is dead in her breast, and whose life — though her feet still walk the ways of the living — is lost.

Only once has Elenor spoken of Seville. It was when his marriage was published, and the newspapers lay on our table, and she knew her silence,

if she did not speak, would seem strange to us. She thinks she has her secret buried in her own heart ; and so she has —and in ours.

We have purchased the Wayne farm. What St. John's reasons for enlarging his domains may be, the future may perhaps explain. Mr. Wayne, who is now living in California, is thus relieved of the last tie that binds him to Baywood.

Seville has cost me much bitter thinking. He was almost another St. John. We had such regard and admiration — almost adoration — for him. And now he has shown the bad, weak side of his splendid nature. Seville was a prince, and I will never again put my trust in princes. I hope he may never have such a lesson to learn as this he has taught to us ! I hope he may be very happy. And I hope there are no other lives in the land quite as sombre and desolate as this life which I have tried to write about.

Of course there are no Austin Waynes ! Every good wife — if this simple, plotless story ever comes to light — will be sure that *her* husband is a St. John. I hope he is.

THE END.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DOCTOR ADDS A POSTSCRIPT.

THE foregoing MS., a little dingy from being five years in my desk, fell into my hands yesterday ; and being at leisure, I read it from beginning to end, and decided there was a chapter yet lacking.

Genie is not quite as literary as she used to be. Her " log-book," as she has called it, is sadly neglected ; and her intention to write out the foregoing history more elaborately and send it to the publisher, has only added one more block to the pavement of that region popularly supposed to be macadamized with good intentions.

If the reader will have the goodness to pardon me for thrusting myself upon his attention — after I have already been repeatedly paraded before him by a fond wife, whose only fault is that she greatly magnifies my modest worth — I will try to make it worth his while to listen to me.

I think the main cause of Genie's failure, as

an authoress lies in the fact that our family circle has been increased, since the closing lines of the foregoing chapters, by the addition of three children. I have no desire to startle the nerves of anybody ; but I can't take back what I have said. Three children ! Instead of publishing a story, Genie published a baby, beautifully gotten up in the usual antique style, and entitled St. John, Junior. He was four years old yesterday. I do not like to say he is a fine boy, for he is mine ; but if I were to see such a child in the possession of my neighbor, I should say without reserve that he is a glory to the age.

Volume II. is a little blue-and-gold edition of a girl — blue eyes and gold hair — just beginning to experience a ferocious delight in pulling my beard, and to appreciate the superiority of lamplight over darkness. She inherits my beauty, and, I am pleased to observe, her mother's sweetness (I will endeavor to return, in my weak manner, a few of Mrs. St. John's many compliments), and her name is Little Nell.

The third addition occurred in the person of Master Carl Wayne, "who was dead and is alive again." I think this may surprise the reader ; but he cannot possibly be more surprised than we were.

After Seville's unhandsome conduct, Elenor lived on, much after the manner described by Genie,

— only, as Genie predicted, time sweetened the bitterness of her disappointment ; and in taking care of Genie's boy, and loving him — for no one has yet refrained from loving him — she grew to be much happier. Sometimes she almost forgot herself and all the dark sorrows of her life, in her busy, cheerful care for those about her.

At one time she appeared to have got the idea in her head that she was occupying a dependent position with us, and wanted to go away and “work” — just as if she were not already a main-spring of work ! I looked at her tongue, and discovered a slight bilious tendency.

One day I received this important letter :

“DR. GRAHAM — DEAR SIR : Enclosed you will find an advertisement which you inserted in the ‘Times’ nearly six years ago. I have made inquiries, and am glad to know that you are living in the same old place, and perhaps wanting what you wanted six years ago, namely, little Carl Wayne. I saw your advertisements at the time they came out. The reason why I did not respond was, because — I couldn't ! The spirit was willing, but the heart was weak and selfish. But it is something of a story, and I will begin at the beginning.

“One night in the summer of — you know what year — I was travelling alone on a western-bound

train from New York. It was late, and the passengers were all nodding and dozing and grumbling as sleepy passengers will. We stopped at a small station, and just as the cars were moving on again, little footsteps came running past my seat, and a child called out, 'Mamma!' in a sort of distressed fashion. I raised my head and saw a little boy standing near me, looking anxiously about him.

" 'What is it, dear?' I asked, holding out my hand to him. I had just buried one of the dearest boys that ever lived, and my heart stood wide open to such a cry as he uttered. There must have been something in my sad face that inspired him with confidence, for he came to me at once and I lifted him upon my knee.

" 'Papa came and carried me away from my mamma, and now I can't find her!' he said.

" I thought this a strange statement as a beginning of conversation, and so I questioned him for a while, and gathered from his frank replies something as to what the true state of affairs must be. His papa had come to his mamma's shop when mamma was out, and had taken him to the cars; and his papa was going to throw him out of the window if he cried; and once his papa had struck his mamma in the face with a stick that would cut like a knife; and the 'papa' was on the whole drawn in such forbidding colors, that I had almost

made up my mind to put him under my shawl, and get off at the next station, stealing the child, in turn, from his father, when an accident occurred which flung the rear car down an embankment, making it a perfect wreck, and killing many of the passengers ; and if the man wasn't killed outright, he was certainly *detained*, and so there I was with the boy on my hands. I kept him. I kept him and loved him, and I think he loved me. He would pat my cheek and say, ' My mamma's face is like that ; ' and when I asked him if he would come and live in my pleasant home until we could find mamma, he first asked if his papa would be there, and when I answered with an emphatic ' No,' he almost cheerfully assented.

" Nothing was said in your advertisement about the child's mother ; and being afraid it was the father who advertised, I remained silent, and did the best I could for Trojan, as he called himself.

" For a few days I fancied he was pining for his mother, but he got over that. He had so many ways reminding me of the darling I had lost, that I loved him almost as much as if he had been my own child. Every day I thought I would make an effort to restore him to his mother, and every day something in my heart said, ' Wait until to-morrow ! ' I did everything for him as he said his mamma would do it. He grew to be very fond

of me, but I could never persuade him to call me 'mamma.' I shall have to wait for that word until I shall go to my own boy on the 'other side.'

"Our home was a pleasant one in a country town, and we had everything that a boy delights in—horses and dogs, woodland and trout-streams, carts, tools, barns, kennels, and nice neighbors' children for playmates.

"He is quite a little lad now ; but he has the same child-look that he had when I first saw him, and I have tried to keep him as good as he was then. Every day through all these years I have talked with him about his mother. Her memory is as fresh in his heart as the memory of my boy is in mine. I have one dress in my wardrobe which he always calls his mother's. He remembers, too, her ruffled aprons, and the 'crinkles'—as he calls them—in her hair. His playmates teased him so about his 'girl-curls,' that I cut them off a year ago. They will be found in his trunk.

"Of course I have deeply wronged his mother. I cannot ask her to forgive me. But if she knew how like a second bereavement it is—giving him up—she would pity me. My health is failing, and I have been thinking I wouldn't like to die and leave him to those who might not love him as I do ; and lest I should wait one day too long, I

write now. I have made myself acquainted with the domestic affairs of Carl's parents, and the fact that his mother is living with you, and believing he was killed in the railroad accident I have before alluded to.

"If you will come to Meadowside, Mass., on the 16th of this month, you will find him at the hotel in that place. I shall leave for the South as soon as I hear of his safe arrival at home. God bless him! In the 'sometime' that lies beyond this life I may behold him again.

"MRS. MARTHA ELLIOT."

Whatever Mrs. Elliot's sense of justice may have been, it was a warm, tender heart that throbbed through this letter, and I thought it would be its own argument for pardon if I gave it to Elenor to read.

But what if it should be a cruel sell? — a final ghastly joke of Wayne's?

I waited for the 16th to arrive, and with considerable agitation went to attend to some business in Meadowside. Sure enough, I found the young man looking from the parlor window of the Meadowside Inn, with his mother's own eyes and the identical dimple in his finely modelled chin. Tall, of course, as compared with little Trojan, and

shy, and wrapped in natural sadness at leaving his Aunt Elliot, as he called her.

Joy kills never where grief kills a thousand times, and I brought my Good News and his plentiful baggage on to Baywood as fast as my bonny Morgans could trot. It was dusk when we arrived, and I saw Genie through the fire-lit windows, fidgeting over the immaculate tea-table, with wonderment in her mobile face at my long absence. My man took the horses around to the stable, and I smuggled my Good News into my private consultation room and bade him wait there five minutes.

I hurriedly entered the dining room. Elenor sat by the open fire, the picture of tranquillity, making tatting for Nellie's bibs.

"I hope nobody is killed or dying," cried Genie, who never gives me a chance to speak, running up with a welcoming kiss. "The tea is —"

I lost the rest of the sentence in the concussion of my head with that of John Junior, who had jumped into my arms from a neighboring chair. At the same time little Nell became so entangled in my feet that my only thought was how to extricate myself without stepping on pink fingers.

This little melee over, I found voice to speak, and said as we gathered about the table, "You uproarious little folks may subside at once. I want

to say something ! We are to have, in a few days a young gentleman — almost five years older than you, Master John, — added to our household."

"What do you mean, St. John ?" asked Genie.

"I mean —" and here my voice sounded strange and queer, in spite of my effort to be jocular — "I mean there was once a little person who was thought to be dead — who was thought to have been killed — and the little person is alive and well — and remembers his mamma," pausing between my sentences to calculate the amount of sudden joy the human system is capable of comprehending and sustaining in a given amount of time.

As I uttered the last word, Elenor uttered a glad cry and — did not faint, though she grew very white.

We all rose to our feet — except little Nell, who is not capable of rising to her feet as yet — and John Junior clung to his mother and little Nell tightened her grasp on my beard — both beginning to cry lustily, as if something was very wrong instead of very right.

"Has he been with *him* all this while ?" asked Elenor, tottering toward me.

"No, he has been with one who has loved him, God be praised !"

And then St. John's handkerchief flew to his eyes, and Genie went into rapturous hysterics, and

Elenor fell to sobbing violently, and the children cried more lustily, and Mary Jane came in like a whirlwind — expecting to see the lamp exploded and the whole family wrapped in flames — and receiving no explanation from any of us, put her apron to her face and cried also.

It was some moments before we could have peace, but peace came at last, and I read the letter, and Elenor was ready in her heavenly joy to kiss the feet of Martha Elliot.

“Because, but for her, he might have returned to the rear car ; and then — ”

Yes, and then.

“TO-DAY IS THE 16TH ! ” shrieked Genie.

“Madam, our neighbors’ almanacs teach them that fact. You will bring about bronchial irritation — telling them what they already know ! ” I said soothingly.

“Where have you put him ? ” cried Elenor, starting to leave the room, intuitively guessing his proximity.

“Under the Argand lamp in my back office ! ” I said in a choked voice.

“OH, JOHN ! ” again shrieked Genie, regardless of medical counsel, undertaking to rush past me.

“Stay here ! ” I said, effectively clutching her by the one long curl floating over her shoulder — for

it was her own hair—"Do you want to lead the young man to believe that he has come to a lunatic asylum? Bestow your attention on your own child, who has his fingers in the sugar-bowl, and give me my tea!"

"Wait! I will get a plate and cup for little Trojan," she said in an abated tone, running into the china closet.

Elenor returned soon, leading her handsome son, too proud of him to keep him many moments in the unappreciative back office. Genie kissed him so rapturously that he blushed to his ears.

"Needn't mind that!" spoke up John Junior, noticing his confusion, with the alert eyes of childhood. "She always kisses *me* just that way!" following up his words by a look that said "and you see *I've* survived it!"

This speech drew attention to John Junior, and Master Carl quickly subdued his red cheeks.

What happiness shone in Elenor's eyes! The boy had recognized her at once, and had flung his arms about her neck with an impulsive cry of "mamma!" that must have had very much of the ring of little Trojan in it.

What a feast we had, at last, when fresh tea had been made and we had gathered around the table once more! If one or two of the party were too happy to eat, they *were* eating all the while the

invisible ambrosia of great joy. Elenor could not remove her eyes or hands from the boy at her side; John Junior affectionately drew him out on all subjects which his four-year-old brain was capable of inventing; little Nell gave him a dewy kiss and pulled his hair; and Genie regarded both baby and lad very attentively, and fell to match-making.

Weeks have passed since he came to us. Mrs. Elliot made no mention of the careful culture which he appears to have had, or of the generous gifts of books, toys, and money which accompanied his elaborate wardrobe. And whatever Mrs. Elliot may think of herself, I think it probable that Carl might have fallen into worse hands than hers.

He is an excellent companion, protector, and teacher for John Junior—who follows him constantly; and as for baby Nell, she is so very fond of him, that, like Genie, I am almost ready to declare it a “match.”

So this one broad ray of *son-light* will make Elenor’s “Lost Life” once more bright and warm and blessed.

THE E——.



CHAPTER XXIX.

SEVILLE.



UGUST 1ST.—I was about to write THE END in good earnest, when who should come without warning and without ceremony but Eugene Seville.

I watched Elenor a little nervously as they shook hands; but she was perfectly self-possessed. It was Seville who was embarrassed and whose voice slightly trembled over the commonplace words of greeting. He is a handsome man, and has won a quieter air and a becoming reserve since his summer in Baywood. We read the news of his wife's death two years ago, in some valley among the Alps where they were passing the summer. That event, it must be, has given to the bright, frank face he brought here years ago its pensive shadow.

I think I know what he has come for. Elenor has grown almost young again, with this happiness of finding Carl, and if I can read an eye aright, I can read love in the eye of Seville.

He has asked her to walk with him in the garden.

It is a tender moonlit night, and with the moonlight and old memories and Seville's voice, I tremble for the cool justice with which she should not hesitate to treat him.

Will she be such a goose as to accept him ?

AUGUST 2D — *She will not.*

"Oh no, Mr. Seville," she had said, lifting her clear, tranquil eyes to his, as they stood facing the full harvest-moon. "Your friend I am very glad to be ; but the kind of regard you ask for—is not in my power to give."

There was a long pause, full of the same fragrant silence and mellow light of a summer evening well remembered by both.

"You loved me once, Elenor !" the words burst forth bitterly, reproachfully.

"Did I ?" a blush slowly mounting to her forehead but her voice still sweet and steady. "Then you must perceive that I have succeeded in overcoming that love !"

"Could you not love me again ?" pleadingly.

A sudden flash from the dark eyes. "My love will not go and come at your bidding ! Shall we go in ?"

"Thank you ; no ! Give my adieus to your

friends. Good-by—Elenor! God bless you!" bending above the soft white hand that had laid itself in his.

"Good-by!"

And then the heart that once thrilled under the briefest word from his lips came back into the house, beating tranquilly and evenly. And Seville walked away through the still, silvery night.

THE END.

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